

SECTARIAN MATERIAL FOUND IN ISLAMIC SCHOOL'S STOREROOM



Abu Bakr Boys School on Kent Road

SECTARIAN material was found at an independent Islamic school in Walsall during an emergency inspection.

Ofsted said the material discovered in a storeroom at Abu Bakr Boys School on Kent Road during an unannounced visit on September 27 was a cause for 'concern'.

Sectarianism is a form of bigotry or discrimination between different groups, including people of different religious or political beliefs. Headteacher Mohammed Ramzan told inspectors the material was among items 'donated' to the £1,700-a-year school and intended to get rid of it. But the Department for Education, which regulates independent schools, is now involved and is considering what action to take.

The Ofsted report states: "Inspectors found published sectarian material in a storeroom in the school, which caused them concern. The headteacher explained that the material was there because he was in the process of sorting through books and literature donated to the school."

"He said he became aware of the material at issue the day before the inspection and had planned to dispose of it. Inspectors did not find evidence that the sectarian material had influenced teaching and learning in the school. However, material of this kind has no place in schools and leaders had not ensured any such literature had been prevented from entering the school and being accessible in a storeroom."

Mr Ramzan said: "We would like to clarify that the 'sectarian material' found in the storeroom was found in materials that were ready for disposal and already among boxes of rubbish. Due to the nature of the material, containing Quranic Verses, it has to be disposed in a sacred manner and cannot be disposed with general waste."

"The material in question was received through parents who donate various books, literature and dictionaries and was sorted and ready for disposal."

"As a result, our school's vetting and literature policy has been robustly updated to ensure that this type of error does not occur again. At no stage, did this literature leave the store room."

CRIME

Bank reopens after failed armed raid

A BARCLAYS bank branch targeted in a failed armed robbery on Friday was due to reopen this week. The branch on High Street in Aldridge was targeted by three masked robbers who rammed a Ford Transit van into the building in broad daylight.

The men, who threatened bank staff with machetes, spent just a minute in the building before they fled empty-handed on foot. The robbery was the second at an Aldridge bank in 2016 after one at the Nat- West branch on Anchor Road on March 9.

West Midlands Police said on Monday, no arrests had yet been made in connection the failed robbery and they were appealing for anyone with information to call 101.

POLITICS

Councillor in call for change at top

A WALSALL councillor has called for change at the top of the authority. The cash-strapped council came under fire again last week when their proposed salaries for next year were revealed – with chief executive Paul Sheehan set to pocket a whopping £196,124.

Darlaston councillor Doug James said: "It is time for change at the higher levels of management and re-structure. As locals struggle with bills, heating costs and daily costs there is an obscene disparity in incomes."

ROBBERY

Witnesses plea as card shop targeted

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after an armed robbery on Brownhills High Street. A man walked into the Card Factory shop on December 4, threatening a member of staff with a knife before leaving on foot with a till.

Officers are examining CCTV of the incident. Det Con Deborah Humphries, said: "The suspect is a white man, aged between 35 and 40 and medium build. He was dressed in a beige coloured jacket, a woolly hat and gloves, and had stubble."

You can contact DC Humphries by emailing d.humphries@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

INSIDE

They seek him here ... and there



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Councillor blames Government for funding failure

SOCIAL CARE SET

FOR CASH CRISIS

A SOCIAL care crisis is looming in Walsall as Government cuts take hold, a councillor has warned.

Following a meeting of the health and wellbeing board, Councillor Ian Shires believes the Government's failure to offer any financial help for social care in its autumn statement is a major stumbling block to any progress of recovery plans for the borough's Clinical Commissioning Group.

As the authority looks to make £86 million in cuts over the next four years, Councillor Shires has pointed to a recently published 'Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Plan', put together by the NHS, as proof that a social care crisis is on the way.

Investment

The plan suggests that by 2020/21, £188m in social care cuts will need to be made across the Black Country and Birmingham West, with Councillor Shires suggesting that the authority's share of that will put them 'beyond the bone' in terms of what cuts they can make.

He said: "The Government needs to stand up and realise that this is a crisis they are helping to create."

"The solution can't be to increase council tax, the NHS needs money pumping into it, it needs investment. We will be beyond the bone with what we can cut from social care if we stick to these plans and I do foresee a crisis situation, where people are stuck in hospitals because they can't get a place

By Jordan Harris

in any social care establishment. Once again it is a case of the areas with the most need for investment getting the least money and local authorities being told they have to make huge cuts."

The council is having to make tens of millions in savings and cutting adult social care is just one of a host of proposals put forward. They are also looking to shut a number of libraries in Beechdale, Blakenall, New Invention, Pleck, Rushall, South Walsall and Walsall Wood.

Councillor Shires again pointed to a lack of Government support: "We don't want to close libraries, we don't want to reduce funding for the art gallery, but we have to deliver a balanced budget."

"My opinion is that the problems with a lack of social care funding given to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups is something that has been swept under the rug in recent months."

Edna is on song for 106th milestone



Edna Foxall, with her cake to celebrate her milestone 106th birthday

A 'KIND and caring' woman with a love for singing has celebrated her 106th birthday. Wolverhampton-born Edna Foxall, who lives in Great Wyrley, has reached such an incredible age by choosing to only embrace the positives in life.

Edna has never married and has no children, but has never been short of company due to her kind spirit, love for music and her strong Christian beliefs. Angela Hughes, aged 71, her husband Terry, 71 and their daughter Shelley, 41, visited Edna on her 106th birthday, where staff at the Waters Edge Care Home threw her a party.

Angela said: "Edna is such a lovely woman and it is great for all of us to see her still in such good health at 106 years old. I grew up around the corner from her in Foley Street and she was a good friend of my mother's, I always enjoyed going to see her, she would always be singing and baking and just generally being happy."

Edna worked in Whilds Habidashery from the age of 15 until her retirement, except for a short break to become a post office assistant during the Second World War.

Outside of work she performed with various choirs and saw the length and breadth of Britain as a result of performing.

She also travelled to various parts of Europe with her brother George and cared for her mother, Lucy and father, George, before their deaths. Speaking about reaching 106, Edna said: "I don't feel any different to when I turned 90." The celebration was marked with a performance of Harry Secombe's 'I Believe', by singer Richie Dean.



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Major regeneration scheme step closer



From left to right: Simon Lloyd, Tom Westley, Councillor Lee Jeavons and Jonathan Turner

WALSALL Council has moved a step closer to regenerating sites as part of a new plan which could bring up to 2,000 jobs to the area. It is hoped businesses will move to sites around the M6's Junction 10 in Walsall as part of efforts to regenerate the Darlaston part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ).

The authority's deputy leader and portfolio for regeneration Councillor Lee Jeavons said: "Jobs are of the utmost importance in the borough, which has

been hit hard over the years by the decline of traditional industries. The council has been playing a vital role in the regeneration of Darlaston and Pleck during the past two decades, and now the results of this are starting to come to the fore."

The Darlaston sites are made up of 40 hectares of land. Phoenix 10 is the largest of them and sits near Junction 9 and Junction 10 of the M6. The site was formerly used as an IMI refinery but when it is redeveloped it could house

a development of up to 60,000 square metres. It is hoped that it might be completed by 2022.

Other sites in Darlaston include Aspect 2000, Gasholders, Box Pool, Central Point and Tempus 10.

Other developments helped by the council include the recently finished £26 million Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project, which has improved roads to provide better access to some of the town's key employment sites.

Benches face axe to stop street drinkers

BENCHES could be removed from parts of Walsall to deter 'prolific' boozy behaviour.

Walsall Council has already spent £200 removing seats from outside Coral in Bradford Street in a bid to drive down street-drinking and anti-social behaviour.

Other problem areas in the town have also been identified, including near the Cenotaph and in Caldmore Green, and the authority is said to be considering removing further benches.

An investigation has found benches are encouraging drinkers to loiter in the town. It comes after National Express bus drivers raised issue with drinkers passing out and urinating in public at the Cenotaph nearby, in September.

The decision to remove benches has been revealed in a report set to be discussed by the Walsall South Area Panel on Thursday.

Problem

Area manager John Morris said: "Walsall South Area Panel has provided £200 to Walsall Council Town Centre management team to help with the costs of removing benches from the town centre, following issues with street drinking and anti-social behaviour in the Bradford Street area of town."

"Evidence showed that the benches were part of the problem, attracting street drinkers to this part of town, that then led to crime and anti-social behaviour."

The council has not stated exactly how many more benches could be axed or what the total cost could be.

A spokesman said: "Two benches were removed from outside Coral the Bookmakers in Bradford Street in August this year, following issues of street drinking and anti-social behaviour."

"Removal of the benches cost £200 and was funded by the Walsall South Area Panel. The benches are currently in storage."

However Councillor Aftab Nawaz,



A bench in Bradford Street, Walsall, near the site of ones that have already been removed

who represents St Matthews and sits on the Walsall South panel, confirmed others were being looked at throughout the borough, including those near the Cenotaph and in Caldmore Green.

He said: "I don't know many are being looked at. I am aware that we have an issue at the top of Caldmore Green."

"We have had a huge amount of pressure from residents who, whenever they go past see young people sitting there drinking. We have been contacted by pensioners who use the benches while they wait for the buses, so we have got to strike a balance."

Councillor Nawaz added: "It is not a specific problem to Walsall which makes life difficult for elected members. We have had an increase in the town centre because of the cheapness and availability of alcohol within an enclosed space."

"The problem has become very prolific now, with people drinking in the streets making like very difficult."

"It does not give the best impression of the town when what we want to do is promote Walsall. It is a very unfortunate problem. The benches were put there originally to help elderly people to sit down and take a rest."

"But instead they cannot use them

because of these irresponsible people using them to loiter around and drink."

Councillor Harbans Sarohi, who also sits on the Walsall South panel, called for police to take action rather than remove any more benches.

He said: "The benches are used by members of the public during the day. I think instead of removing the benches the police should take action. There are problems especially in the summer with people sitting around drinking, but moving the benches should be the last resort."

"The police are the law enforcement agency and they should be the ones taking action."

Concerns at bus lane on main route after crashes

'SOMETHING has to be done - one day this could kill myself or one of my family': The words of a Walsall business owner who has called for a bus lane to be removed on a main route into town.

Jenny Mann claims that 'countless' crashes have taken place because of the bus lane on Wolverhampton Road over the last five years.

The lane was installed in 2011 and Ms Mann, who owns Manns Carpets, said that in the past week alone, two crashes have taken place there. She said: "I have tried speaking with the council about this for a while now, but it is like talking to a brick wall. The problem is that the lane starts just after a hill, so people don't see it coming."

"If they are trying to access my business or one of the others on the street, or even get into one of the side streets, it leads to all manner of confusion because they don't want to get a fine. This is a road that comes off the M6 too, so if there are diversions we can have hundreds of cars coming through with drivers that don't know the area and don't know the lane is coming. "I thank God that no-one has been killed so far but I really think that is a strong possibility."

The Penalty Charge for travelling through a bus gate, being in a bus lane or bus-only street is £60. If payment is received within 14 days of the notice date the charge is reduced to £30.

Walsall Council spokesperson Kate Goodall said: "The bus lane on the east bound carriageway plays an essential role in aiding the efficiency of traffic flow and easing congestion. There are no proposals to remove this bus lane."

"The Council undertakes an annual review of road traffic collision data in order to inform priorities in the Local Safety Plan."

"The next review will be considered by Cabinet in February 2017."

Self care is urged for festive period

PEOPLE should focus on their self care if they feel unwell over Christmas and New Year, Walsall doctors have said. In many cases people can take care of their minor ailments, reducing the number of GP consultations and enabling GPs to focus on caring for higher risk patients.

Supporting people to take more responsibility around their healthcare helps improve people's health and well-being and helps people to better manage minor ailments and long-term conditions like diabetes or asthma.

Pharmacists can also help and are fully trained to advise on the best course of action for colds and minor illnesses. This is sometimes the best and the quickest way to get help for minor illnesses. Dr Anand Rischie, GP at Pleck Surgery and chairman of Walsall CCG, said: "Self care is important throughout the year, but especially during the winter months."

For more information about self care and pharmacy opening times visit: www.walsallccg.nhs.uk/stay-well-walsall.

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People are taking the train more frequently

THE number of people catching trains across the Black Country and Staffordshire has increased by nearly seven per cent in the last year, new figures reveal.

There were 20.375 million 'entries and exits' at stations across the region in 2015/16, up from 19.081 million the year before.

Of the region's 33 train stations, just three saw their overall visitors decline during that time. According to the estimates of the usage by the Office of Rail and Road, Cannock station was visited by 221,124 people in 2014/15 but a total of 220,290 travellers over the last year.

Cannock could benefit from £76m work which will see electrification of the Chase Line, which runs from Rugeley to Walsall. Meanwhile Wolverhampton railway station, which is operated by Virgin Trains, saw 4.746m visitors in 2015/16 – an increase of 5.6 per cent from 2014/15's total of 4.495m. Dudley's busiest station, Stourbridge Junction, saw an increase to 1.434m. It rose from 1.325m and showed an 8.3 per cent rise.

Rowley Regis, which was the busiest in Sandwell, was used by 1.015m passengers after 921,116 people used it in 2014/15. People using Walsall rose to 1.404m from 1.303m in 2014/15 – a 7.7 per cent increase.

Steve Wright from independent campaign group Railfuture said: "We are very enthusiastic about rail in the West Midlands and it is generally accepted that it is growing more quickly than anywhere else in the country."

Bollards installed at festive market

CONCRETE bollards have been installed around Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market as part of a series of 'safety measures'.

Police worked with Birmingham City Council and agreed the measures before the market opened last month.

It has seen some concrete bollards installed at a number of locations around the pop-up event.

Supt Andy Parsons said: "The installation of the bollards formed part of the original security plan and is not a result of any new or specific intelligence. It is a busy time of year for the city and we want to ensure a safe and enjoyable time for everyone.

The market got under way on November 17 and runs until December 29.

Rag 'n' Bone Man set for city date

BRITISH blues singer-songwriter Rag'n'Bone Man is to perform in Birmingham after his debut album is released early in the new year.

He will be at the O2 Institute in Digbeth on April 24.

Family business invited to spice up No 10



Sanjay Aggarwal of Spice Kitchen

A MOTHER and son who run a family business paid a visit to Downing Street as part of an event to celebrate small businesses and their contribution to the economy.

Sanjay and Shashi Aggarwal, of Walsall artisan spice company Spice Kitchen, were highlighted as an example of a successful small business by Government business bosses.

The pair began their business journey in early 2013 and have gained a reputation for selling freshly ground spice blends sourced from around the world.

The visit to Downing Street came ahead of Small Business Saturday, a campaign recognising smaller companies that make a huge contribution to their community.

Sanjay said: "We are touched to have been selected for Small Business Saturday this year and honoured to be invited to Number 10.

"We enjoyed meeting other businesses and sharing our mullled apple juice with all."

By 2020, £1 in every £3 of government spending will go to small businesses, either directly or through the

supply chain. Small Business Minister Margot James said: "Spice Kitchen highlights the success of growing small ideas into thriving businesses.

"This Government supports entrepreneurs right across the country." Ms James went out on the streets on to support the local, small businesses, which she said 'make Britain great'.

Shashi was born in Kenya, grew up in India and has lived in the UK for more than 30 years. She has 40 plus years of cookery experience and is an oracle when it comes to using spices.

Jail for pair in horror knife attack on woman

A MAN and his niece who savagely attacked his ex-wife, slicing off half her ear in front of their children after she would not take him back, have been jailed for a total of 14 years.

Kathleen Reilly was dragged by the hair into her living room by Kelly Corcoran and her mother Deborah Corcoran, who was sentenced last month, and held down by the women while she was kicked and punched by Patrick Reilly.

She had been tricked into opening the door of her Walsall home shortly before midnight on April 4 by Kelly Corcoran, 26, who stood alone on the doorstep while the other two hid, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

As they dragged her back inside, the three shouted obscenities at her, waking her three children who came downstairs and screamed at the adults to leave their mother alone.

Instead Patrick Reilly brandished a flick knife at them while his sister Deborah Corcoran, 45, shouted at them to be quiet before he sliced the victim's ear, telling her: "No other man will ever look at you again." The three then fled the house in Bloxwich Lane, Bloxwich.

Disfigured

Judge Marcus Tregilgas-Davey said: "It was a disgraceful act of group violence perpetrated on Kathleen Reilly in her own home late at night that has left her permanently disfigured because unfortunately the medics were unable to reattach her ear."

Addressing Patrick Reilly, he said: "You brandished a knife at your own children. It beggars belief that a man would do that to his three young children." The court heard that Reilly, 37, could not accept that his wife would not have him back after they split and that his sister and niece believed she had brought shame on the family as a result.

All three defendants were convicted of causing grievous bodily harm following a trial. Deborah Corcoran, of Stone Close, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, was jailed for six years earlier this month and the hearing adjourned for reports on the other two. Sentencing Reilly, of Rugby Close, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, to nine years and Corcoran, of Vicarage Road, Bristol, to five years, the judge said: "There was clearly a considerable degree of planning."

He also placed a restraining order on Reilly not to contact his ex-wife.

Red-dy, steady, go for Santa dash



Hundreds of participants enjoying themselves during the Santa Dash around Sandwell Valley Park

A SEA of red descended on a Black Country's beauty spot as a returning Santa Dash event attracted 700 participants.

The event at Sandwell Valley Country Park is only in its second year but has proved a huge hit with all types from keen runners to those seeking a bit of fresh air.

The rain clouds threatened to ruin the fun but held off leaving dry conditions for those walking, jogging or running around Swan

Pool. Cathy Ferriday, one of the organisers at Mytime Active, said: "It was incredible to see so many people from families to those with dogs to others with children."

Mytime Active has organised the event, supported by Sandwell Leisure Trust and Sandwell Council, as a fun way for Sandwell residents of all ages to get active and enjoy themselves at Christmas.

For £5 participants who signed up had the choice of walk, jogging,

or gently strolling the 2km route.

The event started with a mass Christmas-themed warm-up to get everyone in the festive spirit before the dash got underway around 11am on Saturday.

Rupi Lal, a presenter at Radio Sandwell which hosted the event, said it was "amazing."

The 34-year-old said: "It was great to see so many young people there and people of all different cultures and backgrounds."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pupils are taught on tackling abuse

PUPILS in Great Barr have been learning to speak out against abuse, as part of an NSPCC project that is looking for new volunteers.

The charity's 'Speak Out. Stay Safe' project teaches schoolchildren aged four to 11 about sexual, emotional and physical abuse and how to report it. The NSPCC School Service team spoke to Ferndale Primary School pupils from year groups one to six in a special hour-long assembly.

To become an NSPCC volunteer or to find out more, visit www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do

Youngsters send off boxed-up aid

PUPILS at a Walsall school have made a helpful donation to the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal.

Students at Queen Mary's High School donated 363 shoe boxes filled with toiletries, toys, games and clothing for children in Eastern Europe.

They have also raised money to cover the shipping cost for the boxes.

Dr Anna Gottschall, head of the school's Eliot House, said: "The pupils were so moved by the videos provided by the charity and by the dedication of the volunteers, that they felt compelled to lead our contribution".

Problems finding perfect Christmas

ONE in six people in the West Midlands feel unable to cope at Christmas according to research by Mind.

The UK's leading mental health charity found that 16 per cent people feel lonelier at Christmas than any other time of the year with one in five feeling 'alone in a crowd'. Part of the problem appears to be overly high expectations, with more than a quarter of people feeling the pressure to have the 'perfect Christmas'. Go to mind.org.uk/ourchristmas for details.

Scout in abuse had link to Aston Villa

ASTON Villa is the latest club to be part of an investigation in the sex abuse in football inquiry. The club has links to a former scout who was jailed for abusing boys in the 70s and 80s.

Ted Langford, who has since died, was jailed for three years in 2007 for abusing four young players. He is said to have managed a feeder club.

In a statement Aston Villa said: "The club co-operated fully with the authorities during the investigation at that time."

Roadworks end hope

EMERGENCY gas repair works on a busy Willenhall road should be completed today, Thursday.

The temporary traffic signals have been in place 24-hours a day, on Clarks Lane, since last week, and were due to be removed earlier this week.

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WEATHER-forecasting terms. Remind me again. Are dribs and drabs wetter than spits and spots?

THE Government's £10 Christmas bonus arrived in 1.2 million bank accounts this week. If this piffing handout, unchanged since 1972, were scrapped I bet 99 per cent of recipients would not even notice. Yet it would free up tens of millions of pounds which could be spent on nurses and carers for those who really need help. All it takes is political will.

DID you begin losing the will to live as you followed the Supreme Court hearing into Brexit? That's how it is with lawyers. I've covered hundreds of court cases and heard many barristers and judges doing their stuff. You get the impression they are paid by the word. There are honourable exceptions but, as a rule, lawyers simply adore delivering long, intricate screeds punctuated with many sub-clauses and endless references to obscure precedents. There were times, as the dissection of Brexit plumbed depths of mind-screaming intricacy, when the nation would have gladly settled for the judges deciding the future of Brexit by electing one of their number to toss a coin. Heads, we're out.

BANK of England governor Mark Carney says millions of jobs could be lost as a result of automation and robots. This news is greeted as a nightmare. Which is odd because the last time it came around, it was regarded as a dream. In the 1930s, automation promised an end to mankind's drudgery. Columnist, Phil Hickman, once told me the dream of the pre-war years was that people would have to work only a few hours per week "and we'd spend the rest of our time writing poetry and making mandolins and suchlike." It never happened. The Second World War came along and kept everybody busy for six years. The following decades were spent recovering. Today the prospect of jobs being taken by machines fills us with dread. But why? I bet the answer is that the jobs we do today, mostly in warm, clean offices, are far removed from the dirty, back-breaking labour of yore. Work gives us status and colleagues. We don't want it to end. If the age of the robots is coming, we will have to make them our servants, not our masters, and find new ways of keeping ourselves occupied. Anybody want a mandolin?

THIS is hardly a scientific survey but our local corner shop sold 40 books of stamps in a single day, which is apparently outstanding even for the time of year. Could it be that Christmas cards are regaining lost ground? Surely it was only a matter of time before people realised that a multiple-address Xmas email doesn't really hit the spot.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Enterprise zone hope for 2,000 jobs

WALSALL Council has moved a step closer to regenerating sites as part of a new plan which could bring up to 2,000 jobs to the area.

It is hoped businesses will move to sites around the M6's Junction 10 in Walsall as part of efforts to regenerate the Darlaston part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ).

The authority's deputy leader and portfolio for regeneration Councillor Lee Jeavons said: "Jobs are of the

utmost importance in the borough, which has been hit hard over the years by the decline of traditional industries. The council has been playing a vital role in the regeneration of Darlaston and Pleck during the past two decades, and now the results of this are starting to come to the fore."

The Darlaston sites are made up of 40 hectares of land. Phoenix 10 is the largest of them and sits near Junction 9 and Junction 10 of the M6.

The site was formerly used as an IMI refinery but when it is redeveloped it could house a development of up to 60,000 square metres. It is hoped that it might be completed by 2022.

Other sites in Darlaston include Aspect 2000, Gasholders, Box Pool, Central Point and Tempus 10.

Other developments helped by the council include the recently finished £26 million Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project,

which has improved roads to provide better access to some of the town's key employment sites.

Birmingham-based Cushman & Wakefield has been appointed to help the authority find developers and businesses to occupy the buildings once they have been completed.

Jonathan Turner, of Cushman & Wakefield, said: "We are really pleased to be continuing our relationship with Walsall Council."

Police stop and search rates are on the rise

THE rate black people are stopped and searched by police in the West Midlands is on the increase after a recent dip.

Black people were 4.2 times more likely to be stopped this year than white people compared to 2.7 per cent last year. Asians are 1.7 times more likely to be stopped than white people.

Police said the rise was 'disappointing' and put it down to a number of campaigns that have targeted groups where the men have happened to be black. Previously the rate had nearly halved from 4.6 times more likely in 2013/14.

Chief Constable Dave Thompson said: "Through close scrutiny of the data it has been identified that the rise is due to an increase in stop and search activity on young black males involved in anti-social behaviour in Birmingham City Centre."

"An action plan for Birmingham West & Central Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) is now in place and numbers of such searches are already reducing significantly. As a consequence, it is anticipated the current WMP figure of 4.2 times more likely, will start to reduce."

Figures show that in Dudley black people are 5.6 times more likely to be stopped than white people and Asians are 2.4 times more likely to be stopped. In Walsall black people are 5.5 times more likely to be stopped and Asians 1.2 times.

In Sandwell black people are 3.4 times more likely to be stopped and Asians 1.8 times.

Charity in call for volunteers

DISABLED charity Sense is calling for volunteers to help out with their short breaks programme which it runs for disabled children.

Launching in February 2017, the short breaks follow this year's successful programme, and will see 30 children and young people experience up to three separate trips away from home over 12 months.

The programme has been praised for the respite it provides to families, and vital developmental benefits for the participants. The breaks are designed to offer the children in the area the chance to make new friends, increase their independence and try new activities.

To volunteer, visit www.sense.org.uk or call 020 7520 0962 or email shortbreaks@sense.org.uk.

Rush-hour crash delays on busy route

A CRASH on the Black Country Route in Willenhall caused rush-hour delays last Wednesday. The collision occurred around 4.45pm near the junction with The Keyway and partially blocked the road causing delays for traffic heading towards the M6.

School safety fears as wardens may disappear

By Nathan Briant

LOLLIPOP wardens could disappear from outside school gates across Walsall as part of drastic cost-cutting measures.

Cash-strapped Walsall Council wants to save £85,000 by getting rid of 39 crossing patrols.

It has sparked concern among parents and teachers who are now worried the measure could result in pupils being left injured or even killed by dangerous drivers.

Headteacher Matthew Draper, of Mayfield Preparatory School on Sutton Road, started a petition on the council's website to keep the service. It has already been signed by nearly 500 people.

Mr Draper said: "One of the services that the council provides which protects children and they cannot want to get rid of are the crossings."

"There must be so many other areas that they could save."

Dramatic

He said the cost of a crossing patrol outside a school - about £4,700 per year - would be minute in comparison to the costs of any injuries that might be inflicted by a speeding driver outside the school.

In a letter sent to the council, Mr Draper notes 'the Government's own national statistics show a dramatic fall in the number of casualties and deaths at crossings with human control'.

The school had to campaign to get their current lollipop lady in 2011. The authority had scrapped the post in 2008.

Under the proposals, crossings classed as 'category two' would be axed.

Those are outside schools which already have crossing facilities outside them, such as pedestrian, pelican and zebra crossings.

Other schools classed as more high risk 'category one', which do not have other crossing facilities, will be unaffected.

A Walsall Council spokeswoman said: "Over recent years the council has made savings of £123m. The



Pupils Maanav Sawhney, aged 10, Faris Ashraf, eight, Sahana Satish, eight, and Eliza Thacker, 10, from Mayfield Prep

council is now consulting on plans for the next four years during which a further £86m has to be saved.

"The council is consulting on a proposal that reviews all category two crossings. Category two crossings are those which have an alternative crossing facility such as a pelican or zebra crossing. School crossing patrols are not a statutory service and category one crossings are not impacted by this proposal."

"The council is proud of its school

crossing patrol wardens and the part they play in keeping the public safe at category one sites.

"However, with the current financial pressures, it is right that the council looks at crossings where alternative facilities are available."

Crossing

"Walsall Council will work with schools to look at alternative funding for the category two patrols and will engage with schools to see if they can

fund the crossing patrols from within their budgets."

The 39 schools, which have a category 2 crossings and therefore could be hit by the changes, include Birchills Community Academy, Blakenall Heath Junior, County Bridge Primary, Mayfield Preparatory, St Bernadette's Catholic Primary and Woodlands Academy of Learning.

To see the full list of schools that could be impacted visit expressandstar.com

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Beating the Drum for charity cash

A WOLVERHAMPTON-based military charity raised £1,500 to help veterans and their families.

The Dependants and Relatives of Uniformed Military (Drum) donated to two organisations, with £1,000 going to Combat Stress and £500 to the Burma Star Association.

The group raised the cash via holding fun days and raffles over the last year.

DRUM secretary Vanessa Jones, said: "We are a tiny group of people who give their time and skills voluntarily to raise funds that help the children and families affected by the conflicts past and present in the world."

"I would like to help everyone who contributed to the cause over the past year."

Homes scheme for school land

A PLAN to build homes on a Walsall secondary school's land was due to be decided by councillors.

An application seeking to build three homes on part of Aldridge School's playing fields fronting Quick-sand Lane and another four on part of the fields fronting Bosty Lane.

Only access details will be considered at this stage of the application.

Six letters of objection from four residents were received over the first application, mainly because of worries the homes being built could have on residents.

Another seven letters of objection from six residents were submitted over the Bosty Lane plan.

Firms sponsor Rep tickets

NEARLY 200 disadvantaged children will attend Birmingham Rep's brand new production of Treasure Island, thanks to the generosity of five businesses.

Gateley, Catalyst Corporate Finance, Pinsent Masons, The Rigby Foundation and Gowing WLG have all sponsored a number of theatre tickets.

The tickets will be offered to young people aged seven to 16-years-old in areas with particularly high deprivation. The Christmas production of Treasure Island runs at the theatre until January 7.

Car bursts into flames on M6 causing delays

A CAR burst into flames while travelling on the M6 in Staffordshire causing delays for drivers going north.

Plumes of black smoke rising from the car spread across the carriageway between Junction 11A, for the M6 Toll, and Junction 12, for Telford.

Emergency services had to stop traffic over safety concerns. Motorists were brought to a halt on Saturday afternoon while firefighters extinguished the blaze. Two lanes of the motorway reopened within an hour.

Deeney goal on inspiring youngsters



Troy Deeney on the mark for Walsall

EX-WALSALL striker Troy Deeney, whose career was disrupted when he was jailed for affray, has told how he turned away from crime to get his life back on track.

Deeney currently captains Premier League Watford, but life has not always been plain sailing for the Saddlers academy graduate, who grew up in Chelmsley Wood.

The 28-year-old, left school at 16 with no GCSEs, trained as a bricklayer, earning £120 a week and was sent to prison in 2012.

The striker recently returned to

his hometown with former British sprinter Darren Campbell.

Deeney now wants to inspire children with a similar upbringing that they can achieve things they put their minds to. In a television interview, he said: "I was a real good kid and then I got to year seven and got detentions and I'd be on report all the time. I do feel that you play up to it."

"The people you look up to are the drug dealers, the robbers, the schemers - they're the guys with the nice cars, the nice trainers."

After his dad was diagnosed with

terminal cancer in February 2012, Deeney went out drinking in Birmingham and became involved in a brawl which left one victim with a broken jaw and another with 20 stitches in his lip. At 23, he admitted affray and was sentenced to 10 months, serving two after showing remorse.

He is now in the process of setting up his own charity and makes regular trips back to Chelmsley Wood.

"There's a way you can inspire people," Deeney said. "I'm in a very fortunate position where I've learnt lessons the hard way."

Parades in borough are secured for three years

REMEMBRANCE Day parades across Walsall look set to be secured for the next three years.

Parades across the borough had been under threat after West Midlands Police said earlier this year they would no longer be providing officers for traffic management duties.

This week, cabinet members will discuss whether the council could afford to provide funding until 2019, despite the authority's bid to save £86m over the next four years.

To ensure parades were not disrupted this year, Walsall Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to share costs for traffic management for this year only and 10 parades successfully went ahead.

The policy change caused outrage among residents, politicians and Royal British Legion members, prompting the authority to set up a working group to consider a way forward.

The cabinet will be asked to agree to make a financial contribution for traffic management to event organisers of the independent parades which took place this year going forward.

This would be 30 per cent of traffic management costs, up to a cap of £1,000 per parade, for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, with the contribution being reviewed in the financial year 2019/20.

Pleased

A statement from Walsall Council said: "The report to cabinet will consider recognises that the council does not currently have the resources to organise and manage remembrance parades, apart from the civic parade in Walsall Town centre."

Leader of Walsall Council, Councillor Sean Coughlan said he was 'pleased' that the plans look set to go ahead, despite the council's current financial situation.

He said: "Our communities have traditionally turned out in large numbers across the borough to commemorate those who have given their lives in the service of our country."

"As a council, we are committed to helping our communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement. We do, however, have a challenging financial position to contend with for the foreseeable future. Despite this, I am pleased to be able to recommend a council contribution for the next three years to give event organisers some certainty."

Praise for brave police officers



Sergeant Heffernan, Pcs Collins, Fowkes and Bond with centre, Chief Constable Dave Thompson

FOUR police officers who kept their cool when dealing with a hostage situation have received a top honour for their bravery.

Sergeant Andrew Heffernan and Pcs Mark Collins, Stephen Fowkes and Darren Bond were called to a hostel in Walsall after reports that a man was holding a knife to another resident's throat.

They have received a Chief Constable's Commendation for their "professionalism and pa-

tience" which led to the hostage being released. The intervention is believed to have saved at least one life. The incident unfolded on March 4 this year.

A cordon was put up around the building. The hostage-taker was hallucinating and acting unpredictably but the force said Pcs Collins used wit and communication skills to gain his confidence and control his behaviour. Officers also noticed the room contained

other weapons including bows and arrows, so force negotiators were deployed, along with an armed response vehicle.

After almost two hours the assailant released the hostage and gave himself up. He was subsequently charged and remanded in custody.

In honour of their bravery, the officers received their commendations at a ceremony at the force's Tally Ho! Training Centre.

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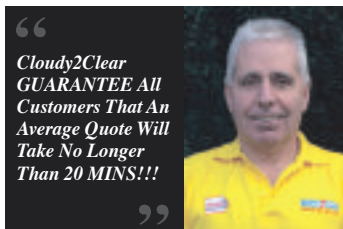
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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Puncture? It wheely should not be so hard

I SUPPOSE it was inevitable, following last week's rant about the disruption caused by pothole repairs, that I would immediately come a cropper by driving over one.

So it came as no surprise that two days later I had a puncture caused by a big pothole in a country lane just around the corner from the roadworks in Seisdon I had been complaining about.

Changing a wheel in the pitch black and driving rain is never pleasant, and it did feel as if this normally quiet road suddenly became a magnet for most of the traffic in Staffordshire.

And why do modern car manufacturers make everything so complicated? At home, I have got a 40-year-old car, with the spare wheel held in place by a nut and bolt. However, in the new car, the spare is held in place by some crane-like contraption featuring a spring-loaded cable and a set of instructions resembling Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Was there really anything wrong with a nut and bolt? If it is a struggle for me, how hard must it be for a distressed old-age pensioner?

And then we come to the wheel-brace. Again, in the not-too-distant past, a wheel-brace was a simple bar with a spanner on the end. Then there are the telescopic ones, which give you a bit more leverage, and that is fine. But this is the first time I have ever seen a self-assembly wheel-brace, in two parts, with yet more unintelligible instructions. Doesn't it say something about the modern world when even a wheel-brace needs assembly instructions?

While struggling to work all this out, a very nice chap called Steve Beard stopped to help. He too was bamboozled by the spare wheel crane, but after a lot of patient studying, he worked it out and the spare was liberated.

The experience taught me a lot about my fellow road users; some also offered to help, others impatiently tweaked their horns. One even complained that Steve's headlights were too bright.

It also taught me that in the quest for ever-greater sophistication, sometimes we solve a problem that never actually existed in the first place.

□□□

WHILE I love to hear from readers, it was with great sadness that I read the letter from a gentleman in Stourbridge whose wife had her purse stolen at the check-out of a well-known retailer.

He points out that the thief was clearly caught on CCTV, but nobody was monitoring it.

I can only say that it is very sad that such things go on in our community, and I hope the footage was handed over to police. And if the police are unable to identify the offender, please email me a picture. I'm sure one of our readers might be able to help.



Arun Barua, aged four, gets an early gift at Old Square, Walsall



Santa at Birches Valley Forest Centre, on Cannock Chase



Sleigh boat to China? Well not quite, it's Dudley Caverns

You'd better watch out, Santa's in town

As the momentum gathers for the big Christmas Countdown, **TOM OAKLEY** looks at where we'll find Santa this year

HO! HO! HO! The countdown to Christmas has started which means Father Christmas is busy getting gifts ready for all the boys and girls on his 'nice' list.

Despite this, Santa always makes time in his busy schedule to visit these same children.

You know how the song goes: He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake...

And thankfully he's also conveniently located his grottos across the West Midlands this festive season, so there are plenty of opportunities for you to see the man himself.

In the Black Country, the Dudley Caverns offer something a bit different with their grotto underground. Children are invited to travel by boat along an illuminated journey to see Santa and his elves. There will be carols, hot drinks, mince pies and seasonal entertainment. For details visit www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk.

Ranging

Elsewhere in the town, families are invited to visit Santa in his grotto set within the Dudley Zoological Gardens. It is open every day up to Christmas from 10am until 3.30pm with prices ranging from £4.50 for children's tickets to £8 for adults.

The Black Country Living Museum is hosting Santa hunts. In Stourbridge, the Bonded Warehouse is offering a boat ride down the canal before visiting Santa's Grotto in the warehouse.

Trips will run on December 17, 18 and 22, with tickets available to book by contacting Heidi Barratt on 01384 395216.

With an allocated time slot to see Santa at the West Midlands Safari Park, you will be greeted by one of his helpful Elves who will



The Bonded Warehouse is all set for their Santa boat trips. Pictured as Santa is David Caunt

show you to the sleigh where you will be magically transported to the North Pole.

While Santa's Grotto is a decorated log cabin with its own Christmas tree, festive fireplace and of course a seat next to Santa himself. It is open everyday up to and including Christmas Eve, with tickets ranging from £5 to £21.

More information is available by visiting www.wmsp.co.uk/santa-safari/

At Sandwell Park Farm you can visit Santa in his grotto, receive a gift and write him a letter as part of Sandwell Council's Christmas in the Valley celebrations.

You will also be given the chance to meet his reindeer and other animals at the farm.

Christmas in the Valley runs until December 24 with extra activities scheduled for weekends.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for leisure Councillor Richard Marshall said: "This is our first Christmas at the Valley event and

we want to make it a great one for kids and families."

Book online at www.sandwell.gov.uk.

In West Bromwich, a grotto will be at New Square Shopping Centre until Christmas Eve. Entry to the grotto is £5 including a gift from Father Christmas.

Old Square Shopping Centre in Walsall also has a grotto open until Christmas Eve. Opening times are subject to change and residents are asked to keep an eye on the centre's Facebook page.

Continuing his tour of the West Midlands, Santa will also visit Cadbury World to spread chocolate, gifts and Christmas cheer.

The chocolatiers will be working as hard as elves to create a Christmas chocolate masterpiece - last year they made a 3.5ft chocolate Santa.

Visit cadburyworld.co.uk/whats-on/winter for more information on dates and times.



Christmas chocolates at Cadbury World



Visiting Santa at West Midland Safari Park

While he is in Birmingham Santa will also visit the grotto at the Bullring Shopping Centre.

In Staffordshire, people are being urged to bring their family along to Santa's Grotto at Birches Valley.

The Grotto is housed in a beautiful log cabin and set in the picturesque surroundings of Cannock Chase.

Santa's real reindeer can be found close by, grazing in their forest enclosure.

All children who visit Santa will receive their very own real Christmas tree sapling to take home and plant, plus a small gift.

Tickets cost £10 per child and adults have free entry to the Grotto with a paying child.

Children under one-year-old with a paying sibling can go in for free as long as they don't want a gift.

The grotto is open this weekend and next but is closed during the week.

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Concern for theatre after refurb

I WOULD like to air my concerns regarding the recent refurbishment at the Wolverhampton Grand.

My wife and I used to enjoy the simple 15 minute pleasure of watching the traffic and people go by whilst we sat drinking our pre-ordered drinks during the interval on the glass fronted balcony at dress circle level.

We noted at our last visit that this area is now roped off and is accessible only when one of the newly created booths is hired. We also noted that throughout the evening this area appeared to remain unused.

As we sat with our coats on because of the

chilliness of the auditorium, the audience on the Saturday night for the overpriced thriller could easily have been accommodated in the stalls with room to spare.

Unless prices and layout return to an acceptable level, the audience numbers will not sustain the theatre indefinitely.

Special one-offs will not support the theatre throughout the year, and without regular visitors the venue may struggle to survive.

Management needs to bear this in mind before such changes are made.

CLIVE POTTS
Bilston

Pensioners losing out

ONCE again the pensioners lose out.

While we do not work now, most of us worked for 50 years and paid into the system, and we all have to pay our bills, nothing is free.

The Prime Minister wants to help the low paid, the Chancellor increased the living wage to £7.50 per hour to give them a better quality of life.

What about the pensioners' quality of life or don't we count?

Surely if that's what they class as a fair living wage, we should get the same £7.50 per hour.

What about the millions on benefits who are never going to work, getting a house rent free, council tax paid, plus a cheque through the post, and they will still get their pension.

I suppose at the end of the day, we are the ones who ended up the fools for working.

J LONG
Wednesfield
PS - This letter is based on Mark Cooper's letter that equates to a pension of £3 per hour.

Support our newspapers

WITH regard to the proposed gag on newspapers, i.e. IPSO, newspapers are our only way we are informed as to what the councillors, politicians, celebrities, police force, etc. are up to.

They are proving to be unscrupulous cover-up merchants.

No wonder they want you gagged. If this law is passed they will get away with anything no question!

I entirely support the Press but wouldn't hold your breath. Money talks!

MRS J WILKES
Aldridge
PS - Thank you for a well informed Express & Star. Been reading it forever.

Temporary role insult to public

I REFER to two recent front-page articles, which appeared in the Express & Star, firstly on November 24 and later November 26.

The appointment of Julie Alderson as interim director for change and governance for the next 12 months - what an insult to the taxpayers of Walsall when it is publicly known that hundreds of our people are being made redundant in the bid to save £86m overall. £1,000 per day for the next 12 months, what happens after that?

If the present members of the cabinet can't manage now, what magic wand will make them act differently then?

Next, the proposed closure of Walsall's white elephant, the 'new' art gallery.

The closure plan was obviously made after a cursory glance, perhaps over coffee one morning without a second glance, and that's the case, it's a perfect example of what will happen at the close of Ms Alderson's lucrative 12 months.

Common sense is lacking as usual.

PAULINE POOLE
Willenhall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Walsall Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

walsall.chron@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Art always in firing line when cuts come

I HAVE been following the story regarding the funding cuts that appear to be imminent concerning the New Gallery in Walsall.

I am always surprised that the powers-that-be feel that the arts have little bearing on our lives. When therefore belts have to be tightened, the arts in all its form is first in the firing line.

It would be interesting to ask people how much influence some form of art has had during their lifetime. Words placed in a certain way within the context of a narrative can be life affirming. Music, sounds of voices singing together bring grown men to tears. The sight of young children having their first encounter with pieces of sculpture, great canvases of paint or collage opens new doors.

Art creates debate. In a world where interaction exists on social media, Skyped

images or in languages created by text and e-mail (somewhat ironic as this has been sent by e-mail) we need to be able to look, see, feel touch, smell and comment and debate our experiences.

Taking away the spaces where the public can engage and make judgements of works seems to me like shutting the door on something that is part of our culture part of how we perceive the world by seeing, hearing and touching how others see it.

To think this doesn't matter is so narrow minded on behalf of those who are out to balance budgets.

I am not saying they have an easy job. Constraints make their decisions intolerable. All I am saying there is it is not always the easy way out that works.

DR B DAKIN
Tividale

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Burglar in getaway with TV on bike jailed

A HEROIN addict who burgled the home of his brother's former girlfriend has been jailed for three years.

Shane Winter broke into the address in Turnstone Road, Blakenall, Walsall through a rear window, causing £7,000 damage, while the occupant was out.

He and another man took a large TV and a games console

before escaping on bicycles with the £500 haul on September 30, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

A neighbour saw them riding away and recognised Winter who went on the West Midlands Police wanted list until he gave himself up on October 19 when he also admitted seven cases of shoplifting, all committed during the last week of September and first in October, explained Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting.

During that time Winter struck five times at Co-op Food Stores, targeting the branch in Lichfield Road, Walsall three times and another in High Street, Pelsall twice. He also stole from a newsagent and service station during the crime spree in which he took goods worth around £400.

Mr Peter McCartney,

Report by John Scott

defending, said: "He is ashamed of taking items from a woman he knew. In the eight weeks he has spent on remand in custody he has started to come off the drugs that have blighted his life."

Father of two Winter from Mulberry Road, Bloxwich, who had 14 previous convictions involving 60 separate offences including four burglaries, pleaded guilty to the single burglary and the seven shoplifting offences.

Judge Simon Ward sent him to prison and said: "This was a mean offence but I am very pleased to hear you are doing something about your addiction to heroin."

"You know as well as I do that this will take years now weeks but I hope that you come out of prison clean."

Horsing around on Black Country Route



The view of the man with a horse and cart on the Black Country Route as recorded on Aaron Fellows' dashcam

ASTONISHED drivers were left doing a double-take as a horse and cart ambled down the fast lane of the Black Country Route.

Stunned Aaron Fellows, an engineer, caught the bizarre sight on his dashcam along the A454 between Bilston and Willenhall as he was making his way to work.

The 43-year-old said: "I couldn't see it at first and I wondered what the hold up was because the traffic was going much slower than usual."

"A few cars pulled over to the left and that's when the horse and cart came into sight. I had to do a double-take. I've no idea why anyone would take a horse on that road."

"Everyone was gesticulating to the guy to move over to the left at least. Nobody wanted to go too fast or use their horns in case they frightened the horse either."

"It was a young lad in his 20s. My dashcam has a speedometer built in and it was galloping at about 25mph."

The unusual driver was spotted near Anson Junction just after 10am on November 26. There are no rules banning horse-drawn vehicles from dual carriageways.

Pharmacies open over the Holiday Period

Sunday 25th December 2016, Christmas Day

A Karim's Chuckery Pharmacy	7-9 Kinnery Street, The Chuckery, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 2LD	12:00-15:00
Acorn Pharmacy	41 Castle Drive, Willenhall, Walsall, WV12 4QY	09:00-12:00
B.D.S. Pharmacy	Unit 11, Liskeard Road, Park Hall, Walsall, WS5 3EY	15:00-18:00
Coalpool Pharmacy	140 Dartmouth Avenue, Coalpool, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 1SP	12:00-15:00
Jhoots Pharmacy	36a Pinfold Street, Darlaston, Wednesbury West Midlands, WS10 8SY	18:00-21:00

Tuesday 27th December 2016, Bank Holiday

Asda Pharmacy	42 George Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1RS	09:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	Woodall Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 3JR	09:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	St Lawrence Way, Darlaston, Walsall, West Midlands, WS10 8UZ	09:00-18:00
Boots UK Limited	Unit A, 58 Park Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1NG	09:00-17:30
Boots UK Limited	58 Park Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1NG	08:30-17:45
Sainsbury's Pharmacy	Reedwood Way, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 8XA	09:00-19:00
Tesco Pharmacy	Silver Street, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands, WS8 6DZ	09:00-18:00

NHS

Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

Monday 26th December 2016, Boxing Day

Asda Pharmacy	42 George Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1RS	09:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	Woodall Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 3JR	09:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	St Lawrence Way, Darlaston, Walsall, West Midlands, WS10 8UZ	09:00-18:00
Boots UK Limited	58 Park Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1NG	08:30-17:45
Sainsbury's Pharmacy	Reedwood Way, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 8XA	09:00-17:00

Monday 2nd January 2017, Bank Holiday

Asda Pharmacy	42 George Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1RS	10:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	Woodall Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 3JR	10:00-18:00
Asda Pharmacy	St Lawrence Way, Darlaston, Walsall, West Midlands, WS10 8UZ	10:00-18:00
Boots UK Limited	58 Park Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 1NG	08:30-17:45
Sainsbury's Pharmacy	Reedwood Way, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 8XA	09:00-19:00
Tesco Pharmacy	Silver Street, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands, WS8 6DZ	09:00-18:00



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STAY WELL THIS WINTER

Terror cell pair in plot lose appeal on jail time

TWO members of a Black Country terror cell which plotted to smuggle unborn babies and children into Syria have had appeals against their sentences thrown out.

Ayman Shaukat, the ringleader of Islam Walsall, was jailed for 10 years in May having been found guilty of assisting friends to travel to Syria to engage in terrorism.

And teacher Lorna Moore was sentenced to two and a half years after being found guilty of failing to tell security services that her husband, Sajid Aslam, was intending to travel to Syria and join ISIS.

Islam Walsall has seen at least five members join the ISIS, also known by its Arabic language acronym Daesh.

Both Shaukat, aged 28, and Moore, 34, appealed to the Court of Appeal arguing their sentences were excessive.

Evidence

But in a ruling made by the head of the judiciary in England and Wales, the pair's appeals were refused.

Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, said there was ample evidence to show that Shaukat, of Paragon Street, Walsall, was committed to violent jihad and extremism.

He said: "The sentencing judge had the benefit of hearing the evidence at the trial and was entitled to infer that Shaukat was at the centre of the activities of Islam Walsall that supported the activities of IS.

"There was, in our judgment, more than sufficient evidence before the judge on which he was entitled to conclude that Shaukat was dangerous."

Moore, of Glebe Street, Walsall, claimed she thought her husband was innocently teaching English in a Turkish refugee camp.

But Lord Thomas said she had been



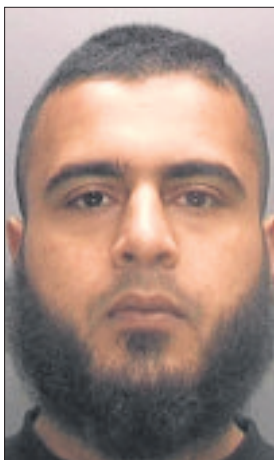
Wife Lorna Moore, sentenced after failing to alert authorities

found to know 'perfectly well' about her husband's dedication to violent jihad. He added: "The information she had was significant, bearing in mind the finding that her husband was, to her knowledge, going to Syria to fight for IS. The sentence passed fully took into account her previous good character."

Shaukat's three-week trial earlier this year shed light on the murky going on within Islam Walsall.

The plot dreamt up in Walsall during 2014 planned to smuggle at least four pregnant women and four young children into the Islamic State.

Also convicted this year was Alex Nash, 22, of Bentley Road, Walsall,



Ayman Shaukat, who wanted to bring up children under the Islamic State

who is serving five years behind bars, plus an additional year on licence, after pleading guilty to trying to join ISIS with his pregnant wife Yousma Jan, then 20.

He was intercepted in Turkey, close to the Syrian border and deported back to the UK.

Mother-of-three Kerry Thomason, whose address cannot be disclosed for legal reasons, was given a two-year prison sentence, suspended for two years, after pleading guilty to assisting her husband Isaiah Siadatan to prepare for acts of terrorism.

She also attempted to travel to Syria while pregnant with her youngest child.

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It's a pizza cake for company rated one of best by staff

A WALSALL company has been named as one of the UK's top three to work for – ranking higher than Google and Rolls Royce.

HomeServe also scored higher than Apple, Unilever and John Lewis. Company bosses celebrated by ordering 450 pizzas and having them delivered via six cars to its international headquarters in Green Lane.

The business began with just 20 people two decades ago and now employees 2,900 across the globe. HomeServe, which also has offices in London, Preston, Nottingham and Banbury, was awarded third place in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work list, the only UK study of workplaces based solely on voluntary feedback from employees.

Only travel website Expedia and electronic chip business ARM Holdings were ranked higher in the study, which covers businesses employing more than 1,000 staff.

HomeServe is the only West Midlands-based company on this year's top 50 list and the only firm to represent the home assistance sector.

Venture

Walsall North MP David Winnick said: "My congratulation to the firm. They are one of the biggest, if not the biggest company in my constituency and I'm delighted that they have been recog-

By Marion Brennan

nised for treating employees well."

HomeServe was launched as a joint venture with South Staffordshire Water in 1993. Its founder, business consultant Richard Harpin, was offered six weeks' work by the water company to look into setting up a plumbing service for customers.

He was recruited to run the new Home Service department in return for a 48 per cent stake, with three staff and £100,000. It made £7 million by year five and £100 million after 15 years. By 2004 the HomeServe section had grown to dwarf the water company and was split into a separate entity with Mr Harpin as chief executive.

Today it has a capital value of around £1billion, with 2.2 million customers.

Greg Reed, chief marketing officer, said: "You take care of your people, they will take care of your customers."



Six cars delivered 450 pizzas to HomeServe's base



Employees celebrate the firm's latest accolade



HomeServe has its international HQ in Walsall

Speed signs could be installed at school

FLASHING signs indicating a driver's speed could be installed outside a Wednesbury school.

More than 200 parents and staff from Old Park Primary handed in a petition to Sandwell Council earlier this year following complaints of vehicles speeding and of parking on zig-zag lines and across driveways.

The council says 'plans' are in place to install the signs in the new year. A spokesman said: "At present Highways are confirming the locations and will be looking to order the parts."

"There are plans in place for them to be installed but it will be after Christmas. It is part of a wider scheme, but this is still at the early stages at the minute."

Parent Hardeep Bhillon, whose son attends the school, welcomed the plans for something to be done.

She said: "The council has said that in 2017 we should have some flashing speed signs in the road."

"Unfortunately we didn't get what we wanted from the petition – which was a zebra crossing or a lollipop lady."

"The problem has not gone away and it is still the same. We have noticed that more traffic wardens come around from time to time but hopefully we will tell the difference when something gets installed."

Last year Old Park headteacher Teresa Boddington branded the situation an 'accident waiting to happen'.

Monitoring strips were placed across the road outside Old Park Primary by Sandwell Council in February. Wednesbury North Neighbourhood police team also attended the school after they were alerted to the parking situation.

Wednesbury Councillors have also supported concerns by requesting

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Homes may be built on stamping works site

DERELICT industrial buildings could be knocked down and homes built on the site if a plan gets the go-ahead.

The Eclipse Stamping Works on Parker Street, Bloxwich show a good example of unaltered industrial buildings in the town and is a 'rare survival of a type of building which was once common' there, according to developers.

Fusion Holdings Midlands Limited, who hope to build the development, want to demolish the existing buildings and replace them with 12 two- apartments, which would include two maisonettes.

In the planning application, Cannock-based Fusion Holdings states: "Eclipse Works comprises industrial units that are owned and were once occupied by Fusion Industrial Ltd.

"The previous occupants have since relocated the business and the industrial units are now empty. The site is no longer viable to remain as industrial works. The vacant site is now susceptible to vandalism, criminal damage, and break-ins which could lead to the presence of anti-social behaviour."

By Nathan Briant

It adds later: "We believe the redevelopment will create a housing scheme that complements the neighbourhood, contribute to local housing need and receive valuable urban land."

There are 14 proposed car parking spaces, along with motorcycle spaces and a cycle store, which would be built as part of the development if Walsall Council officers give it the go ahead.

It is hoped a corner facade is rebuilt with similar materials that were used to build the current building. That has a plaque showing it was built in 1918. A mining risk assessment report prepared for the planning application found although the site sits in a development high risk area, it is suitable for redevelopment.

Get to sea life from penguin perspective



One of the Gentoo penguins that have made their home at the National Sea Life Centre

THEY'RE more used to waddling in the chilly temperatures of Scandinavia, but now nine new penguins have made their home at The National Sea Life Centre in Birmingham.

The new arrivals travelled 1,407 km to reach their destination from their former home in Billund, Denmark.

The Gentoo penguins, four of which were as young as seven months, were accompanied by aquarist Hayley Roberts, who looked after them and ensured their journey to their new home was a smooth process.

The six male and three female Gentoo's will now be introduced to the existing colony as part of the 'Breed, Rescue, Protect programme' and it is hoped there will be the pattern of even smaller feet next spring as the group are encouraged to mate.

Chris Coventry, marketing manager at The National Sea Life Centre, said: "It's great to be a part of an international breeding programme and we couldn't wait to welcome the new arrivals from Denmark. They are such fascinating sea creatures."

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Michelle Landon
Modern/Clinical Pilates Practitioner.

Testimonials: Nuffield Hospital, Keele University, Physio Rehab Centre, Cranage Hall and Rookery Hall.

Why is Friendly Gym aimed specifically at the over 40's?

Michelle: "Younger people are already quite well catered for. There are plenty of ordinary health clubs and gymnasiums, aerobics classes etc. In my experience however, older people find those facilities intimidating. They are full of young, fit bodied people. The staff tends to be very young too. I felt that it was time that the over 40's had a place of their own to keep in shape. They want to exercise as much as younger people do, but they don't feel the need to train like an athlete." "They want equipment that is simple to use, even if they are overweight or suffer from arthritis or low back pain. They want instructors that understand their capabilities and facilities that are a little more luxurious

and friendly than a typical health club. What they don't want is blaring pop music. They want a facility that provides the opportunity to relax and socialise. Clients tell us we have got it just right."

What is the Friendly Gym concept?

Michelle: "Assisted exercise is the name of the exercise system used in the Friendly Gym. There are ten assisted exercise machines and they are 'motorised' to make exercise easy and enjoyable. Each machine has a different function. It takes just 30 minutes to use them all, by which time the whole body has been exercised. Assisted exercise is fun. However poor a beginner's condition may be, and regardless of age, anyone can cope with Assisted exercise."

Do people have to be 40 plus?

Michelle: "No, we have plenty of under 40's using the centre. Friendly Gym appeals to anyone that wants a gentler

way of getting into shape, regardless of their age. But we do tend to attract the over 40's primarily. What pleases me is that we are attracting many clients in their 50's, 60's, 70's and even people in their 80, our oldest member is 92. In fact over 85% of all our members are over 40 years of age. The average age works out at 65."

Can assisted exercise really slow down aging?

Michelle: "Assisted exercise can increase fitness, joint mobility and muscular strength by about 20%. Energy levels are substantially increased. Body fat is reduced. Muscle loss is retarded. The risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and thrombosis are reduced. In my book, this adds up to a serious fight back against the ageing process."

Is figure improvement and weight loss really important?

Michelle: "Average inch loss in the first 12 to 16 weeks can

often exceed a full dress size even when no weight loss is involved. Unlike toning tables or conventional resistance machines, assisted exercise allows you to exercise aerobically and to burn fat. Overweight clients follow our unique weight loss plan that guarantees most clients a minimum of half a stone per month reduction. The combination of muscle toning and weight loss makes assisted exercise the most effective figure improvement program ever devised."

Your centre seems very relaxing. Is this deliberate?

Michelle: "We live in a stress-filled environment and we wanted to create a facility where people could relax. Unwind and socialise. The Friendly Gym is the ideal place to nurture the mind as well as the body. The décor, furnishings and even the background music have been carefully selected to create the right ambience."

How safe is assisted exercise?

Michelle: "Great care has been taken with the design of assisted exercise machines. The back is fully supported at all times and joints are mobilised throughout a safe functional range. Assisted exercise is already helping a lot of our members increase their mobility."

How often should ladies attend and how much does it cost?

Michelle: "To achieve maximum benefit, people should attend two or three times per week. Membership can average as little as £3 per visit. Anyone interested should call and arrange a Free Guest Visit."

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Steve Melia, Deputy Mayor Susan Downing, Charles Hickman



Deputy Mayor Councillor Susan Downing chats to Charlie Valentine Hickman



Councillor Steve Melia chats to traders during a tour of the market



Birmingham singer-songwriter Spence Cater in performance

It's Christmas crackers for all the fun of the fair

SANDWELL'S first-ever mini continental-style festive market has opened in West Bromwich town centre and will be running for six days a week in the run-up to Christmas.

Sandwell Council market bosses have come up with something a little different for the town, and each day from

Monday to Saturday there will be a variety of interesting stalls in the pedestrianised area of the High Street between Kings Square and Queens Square.

Visitors can also listen to a traditional fairground organ, which is providing music to add to the festive spirit, and ride a traditional Ferris wheel.

The organ and Ferris wheel are being run by the Jones family, who also run the Victorian funfair at the Black Country Living Museum.

Councillor Steve Melia, town lead member for West Bromwich, said: "It's great that the usual attractions of the busy shopping centre have been increased with a slice of continental-style foods, confectionery and other festive items."

For information about Christmas trading in West Bromwich, contact the council's markets service on 0121 553 3074.



The traditional fairground organ, providing festive music

Beards in seven-year jail term over killing

A WOMAN has been jailed for more than seven years for the 'shocking' manslaughter and rape of her friend after luring the victim to her home where she was assaulted and murdered.

Julie Beards admitted inviting 20-year-old Susan Whiting to her bungalow in Heather Close, Bloxwich, in August last year knowing that her husband planned to rape her.

The two women, both with learning disabilities, had met at Walsall Adult and Community College. A judge said Beards, 36, was 'suggestible' and controlled by her husband but knew what she was doing was 'very wrong' and had done nothing to prevent it.

Steven Beards was jailed for 33 years in May after being found guilty of the rape and murder of Ms Whiting. The same jury cleared his wife of murder under joint enterprise, instead convicting her of manslaughter, but failed to reach a verdict on the charge of aiding and abetting rape.

She faced a fresh trial but at the last minute pleaded guilty on the basis that she played a lesser role than was originally stated.

Susan Whiting was found dead under a bed at the Beards' home two days after visiting for a sleepover. She had been drugged before being raped by Steven Beards who then strangled her and delivered three fatal hammer blows to her head.

At Birmingham Crown Court last Wednesday, Mr Justice Green accepted that Julie Beards was 'genuinely scared' of her husband.

He concluded her culpability was low but that she could have persuaded Susan not to come. He also said she also knowingly helped her husband hide the body and lied to the police.



Your Christmas Rubbish and Recycling arrangements 2016/17



Changes to your grey and green bin collections

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Your collection day will not change

If your collection day is Monday 26 December

There will be no rubbish or recycling collections on Monday 26 December. Your bins will be emptied on Monday 2 January.

Additional waste

Because extra bin collections have been arranged we **WILL NOT** collect any additional bagged waste. Please take this to one of the two local tips (Household Waste Recycling Centres).

Collections in the New Year

From Monday 16 January 2017 grey and green bins will be emptied every other week.

Please check your bin collection calendar or visit our website for your schedule for the New Year.

Garden Waste

Garden waste collections stopped at the end of October for the winter months. They will recommence on Monday 3 April 2017. Brown bins may be emptied on a different day to grey and green bins. Your first collection dates for April 2017 are available on our website.

Your local tips

Local tips (Household Waste Recycling Centres) will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. Both sites will close at 4pm on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.

Winter weather

If we are unable to carry out the planned collections due to winter weather conditions we will keep you updated by local radio, our website, Facebook and Twitter. We will also leave a recorded message on our Contact Centre number 01922 653344.

Should you require further information:

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Website: www.walsallbins.co.uk

Email cleanandgreen@walsall.gov.uk

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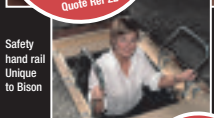
✓ Open
✗ Closed
E Open but early close at 4pm

Household Waste Recycling Centre Opening Times

Day	Fryers Road	Merchants Way
Mon 19 Dec	✓	✓
Tue 20 Dec	✓	✗
Wed 21 Dec	✓	✗
Thu 22 Dec	✗	✓
Fri 23 Dec	✗	✓
Sat 24 Dec	E	E
Sun 25 Dec	✗	✗
Mon 26 Dec	✗	✗
Tue 27 Dec	✓	✗
Wed 28 Dec	✓	✗
Thu 29 Dec	✗	✓
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Ben's mother hails new clock as fitting tribute

THE mother of teenager who inspired others by his spirited battle against a brain tumour has hailed a clock dedicated to his memory a 'fitting tribute.'

The new clock, in honour of 14-year-old Ben Sambrook, was unveiled in Aldridge.

A plaque commemorating the former Aldridge School pupil, who put up a seven-year fight against the disease, is positioned under the clock in High Street.

Ben's mother, Sharon, said: "We are absolutely chuffed as a family to have this in his memory. We are blown away by it. It has been nearly three years since Ben died but it is still fresh in our memory. It is just lovely someone would honour him this way. It is a great tribute on the High Street in the village he loved. The community has always got behind us as a family."

Unveiling

The clock has been funded jointly by William Mitchell Funeral Directors and the owner of the building, businessman Gerry Leighton.

At the unveiling on Saturday there was a reading from a vicar and then the plaque was unveiled by Ben's sister, 14-year-old Emily. Afterwards a number of balloons were released.

Ben was diagnosed with a brain tumour the size of a golf ball when he was seven and underwent gruelling treatment to keep it at bay, including radiotherapy, several operations and months of chemotherapy.

There was joy when the youngster was given a clean bill of health, only returning to hospital for four-monthly scans but in 2012 he suffered a relapse and despite continuing to bravely battle the condition he died at home two years later. In spite of his ordeal, Ben



Funeral firm owner Donna Ryan, mum Sharon and businessman Gerry Leighton



Ben Sambrook, who died aged just 14, after battling a brain tumour

was known for being generous, funny, good company and always smiling.

His parents said his death left 'an unbearable void.' Mrs Sambrook, added: "For us this is really special. Ben is always at the forefront of our minds. The High Street is the right place for this because he always wanted to be the centre of attention. It is a fitting tribute to my little boy."

Donna Ryan, the owner of William Mitchell Funeral Directors, said: "I was involved with Ben's funeral and the reason I wanted to do this was that in all the funerals I have ever done, his is always the one that I remember."

"There was so many people there and I know there is nothing in the village in his memory so I wanted to get the plaque up with the clock."

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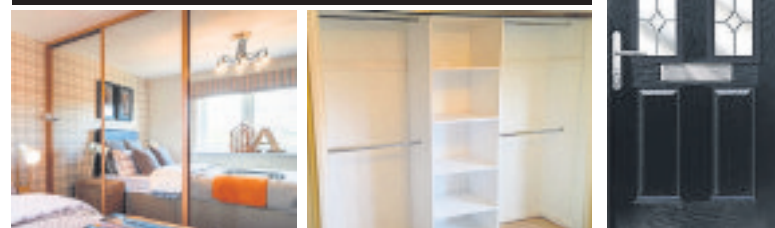


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Queen Square, Wolverhampton, around 1920



Star & Garter, Victoria Street, Wolverhampton



Dudley Zoo's bear pit and viewing platform in 1930



Waiting anxiously for news after the Hamstead pit disaster 1908



A bustling Dudley Street, Wolverhampton, around 1900



Smethwick's Chance Glassworks from around 1920

Chronicling the birth of the Black Country

BLASTS of hot air billowed from furnaces while the streets rang out with the pounding of great steam hammers and the shriek of whistling boilers.

This was the Black Country at the height of Victoria's reign and beyond as the rapid rise in manufacturing exploded across the face of England.

Between 1820 and 1914, Britain was transformed on a scale unprecedented in its history. By the start of the First World War, it was a staggeringly wealthy country.

A century earlier, England was a very different place, with little over a third of its population living in towns and cities. By the outbreak of war, industrialisation had seen that number soar to almost 80 per cent. A new book, *The Lost Country*, has recorded the changing face of England over six tumultuous decades from 1870 to 1930 in images from national archives.

A crowded Dudley Street in Wolverhampton taken around 1900 shows a

MEMORY LANE

By Marion Brennan

prosperous town with shops offering factory-produced consumer items. Freeman Hardy & Willis, on the right of the picture, was opening its chain of shoe shops at the time.

A horse and carriage stands outside the 16th century Star & Garter Hotel in Victoria Street where Charles I allegedly took shelter on the march to Edge Hill, hence the 'Royal' reference. The historic inn was sold and demolished in 1904.

A picture of Queen Square with St Peter's church in the background shows a woman pushing a pram as she walks through a bustling market place. The book also features an image of the zoo's bear pit and viewing platform, which were considered innovative and modernist for the time.

Workers are seen at machines in two pictures taken inside the Beans factory, Dudley. In 1907 George Bean became chairman of the company which had been founded by Absalom

Harper in 1822. Originally a supplier of car parts, during the Great War the company made aero engines, shrapnel and shell cases for the Government. After the war, the firm manufactured the Bean Motor Car.

A photograph taken around 1920 shows Chance Glassworks in Spon Lane South, Smethwick, which produced the window glass for the Houses of Parliament.

In darker scene, an image captures families at the pithead of Hamstead Colliery, Great Barr, in 1908, as they waited for news of victims of a mining disaster. The deep veins of coal were mined with some risk, as was proven when a fire broke out underground and 26 men died from inhaling poisonous fumes.

One of the earliest photos features Bilston Town Hall in Lichfield Street in around 1880. The building reflected the growth of the status of the town from a village on the outskirts of Wolverhampton to a burgeoning coal mining area and later a centre for steel production.

* *Lost England*, price £45, by Philip Davies is published by Atlantic.



Bilston Town Hall, Lichfield Street, circa 1880



Young boys working at the die shop at Beans, in 1915

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Simon opens a window onto new artistic talent

HE'S previously turned pumpkin carving into an art form, but with Halloween well behind us, sculptor Simon Patel is getting into the Christmas spirit instead.

The 40-year-old father from Primley Avenue, Walsall, is starting to make a name for himself on his estate where he lives, with his amazing winter scene window snow art.

It started off with last year when he decorated his own window using his sculpting skills, but now dozens of people are getting in touch asking him to do their windows.

Mr Patel, who is a house husband looking after his two children, said: "I did one for myself last year and put it on Facebook and since then everyone wants their window doing."

"I've had shops asking me if they can come do my windows and did the Charlie Browns clothes shop this week."

"It has gone absolutely crazy, I think I need to make another business out of it!"

Stunning

Simon is a keen artist and sculptor and spends a lot of time carving and making pieces in his workshop during any spare time he has.

And all it takes to make the stunning window displays is snow spray, paint brushes and a Stanley knife.

He added: "First I was doing it for friends and family but now I'm going out and doing it for complete strangers."

"I'm getting about 30 friend requests a day!"

"I'm quite arty anyway. I just do a different scene each time and really enjoy doing it. People think I'm doing



Halloween meets Xmas, with this design



One of the houses he has decorated

it with a stencil and stand but watch me for 10 minutes and are amazed. I had quite an audience outside Charlie Browns.

"Everyone around my estate loves it at Christmastime and it will help pay for the presents!"

Remarkably Mr Patel originally



A lovely Christmas scene by Simon



Pumpkin artist Simon with his works made a name for himself carving pumpkins using rudimentary spoons until he decided to take things a bit more seriously a couple of years ago.

He purchased a German-manufactured set specifically for carving pumpkins which is sold in America setting him back around £150.

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New titles to educate and adorn coffee tables

THINKING of buying your loved one a gardening book for Christmas? Hannah Stephenson leafs through a flurry of new titles ranging from coffee table tomes to practical guides and reference stalwarts.

AS winter beckons and thoughts of the festive season are upon us, now is a good time to plan new beds and borders, find inspiring ideas for your garden and work out how you want your garden to look next year.

Gardening books provide a wealth of inspiration - so whether you're looking for a gift to put under the tree or simply want to examine a new or traditional garden style yourself, here are a few of the books which should get the green-fingered creative juices flowing...

:: Thenford: The Creation Of An English Garden

By Michael and Anne Heseltine (Head of Zeus, £40): This coffee table tome tells the story in words and pictures of Michael and Anne Heseltine's Northamptonshire home, charting the development of the garden over 40 years. It started off as an overgrown woodland, but today there's an arboretum with more than 3,000 varieties of trees and shrubs, medieval fish ponds, a rill water feature and a beautifully restored walled garden.



:: RHS A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants
Edited by Christopher Brickell (DK, £75): This is a Christmas gift to end all Christmas gifts for gardeners, a beautiful reference tool packed with fantastic images and clear descriptions and growing advice for more than 15,000 plants. It's been updated with more than 5,000 new plant entries and new photographs and comes in a majestic presentation box.

:: House Of Plants: Living With Succulents, Air Plants And Cacti

By Caro Langton and Rose Ray (Frances Lincoln, £20): If you love indoor greenery with the minimum of fuss, this book focuses on houseplants that are perfect for urban living, showing both the aspiring and experienced plant enthusiast how to nurture, share and enjoy them, as well as arranging them stylishly in the home.

:: The Quest For Shakespeare's Garden

By Roy Strong (Thames & Hudson, £14.95): Published in association with Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Sir Roy Strong's lively account traces the origins of the Elizabethan garden and tells the story of the Bard's own garden. Accompanied by quotations from Shakespeare's works, it features beautiful illustrations of his gardens, past and present.



:: Gardenista: The Definitive Guide To Stylish Outdoor Spaces

By Michelle Slatalla with the editors of Gardenista (Artisan, £28.99): Full page pictures illustrate the terrific ideas offered by this first book from the team behind Gardenista.com. With more than 1.1 million visitors a month, Gardenista has become one of the online destination source books for garden and exterior

design fans. It features tours of 12 outdoor spaces including a fairy-tale garden, a cottage garden and a posh and pampered greenhouse.

:: Plant Love: The Scandalous Truth About The Sex Life Of Plants

By Michael Allaby (Flibert Press, £14.99): Want to know about botanic sex? Find out in this revealing stocking-filler, an expose of more than 200 of nature's most unseemly liaisons. There's nectar and pollen, but there are also teasers which deliver nothing and cheating among plants takes many forms. Find out how avocado flowers are female one day and male the next, how the violet really does shrink and how giraffes pollinate certain trees.

:: Garden Flora

By Noel Kingsbury (Timber Press, £29.99): Did you know that epimediums contain a compound similar to that which you find in Viagra? Or that ancient armies were reduced by eating poisonous rhododendron honey? This fascinating book examines the cultural and natural history of 133 of the most beloved garden plants, revealing their survival strategies, growth habit and uses. It includes everything from the acer to the zinnia.

:: Vertical Gardens

By Leigh Clapp and Hattie Klotz (New Holland Publishers, £16.99): Gardening no longer needs to be confined to the ground. If you have limited space, this innovative guide offers quirky low-maintenance, space-saving, water-smart solutions, with ideas for vertical gardening on your balcony, your rooftop or courtyard. Learn how to turn bare garden spaces, such as a blank wall or fence, into living walls.



A brisk walk for every mince pie could become a new family tradition



An hour's fast swim will burn off that Christmas pudding with custard and brandy butter

Don't forget to factor in the festive workout

By Abi Jackson

WANT the Christmas treats but not the seasonal weight gain? Simple – just factor in some winter wonderland workouts.

Healthy eating has never been trendier – and that's fantastic. But, as those really in the know will tell you, it's all about the balance, and there are certain occasions when treats should well and truly be on the menu.

And the ultimate example of this? Christmas, obviously.

Feasting is part of the festive fun, and life is too short to never indulge. This is about far more than the joy of semi-permanently affixing a tub of Celebrations to the end of your arm for the Christmas weekend. For many, this is also part and parcel of having some quality time with family and friends, and clinking glasses and good grub can help bring the celebration to life.

There's always a flip-side, of course, and nobody's saying it's a good idea to gorge mindlessly – especially as it's estimated the average Brit consumes a whopping 7,000 kcals on Christmas Day alone, and will gain 6lbs between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day (eek!).

Thankfully, keeping active (is there anything lovelier than a walk on a crisp, peaceful winter's morning?) will help offset the caloric damage.

Here are five Christmas Calorie Kings – and what you'd need to do (bearing in mind that the exact amount of calories burned will depend on your weight, muscle mass and exercise intensity levels, of course) to burn them off...

One mince pie – approx 200 kcals

Burn it off – brisk one-hour walk

One of the great things about walking is that although it can feel like more of a pleasure than exercise, it still works wonders for health and fitness – and gets you out in the fresh air. A family walk would make a wonderful new tradition. It gets people out of the house and lets the kids run around a bit. Walking is also a fairly easy exercise that most of the family can do together. Another option would be bowling or ice-skating.

Glass of bucks fizz – approx 100 kcals

Burn it off – 10 minutes of rope skipping or a 'living room workout'

Can't afford or get to the gym? No fancy exercise equipment? No excuse! Get creative and do a quick workout at home. Skipping with a rope is a fantastic way to get your heart rate up – it gets you breathless in no time – or you could achieve similar results by doing a short session of burpees, star jumps and some body-weight exercises. You could also make these short bursts of exercise friendly competitions with family members – another new family tradition!

Six Quality Street chocolates – approx 260 kcals

Burn it off – Half an hour dancing

Go on; turn the TV off for half an hour and crank up the festive tunes. Whether you're by yourself, with the stuffy in-laws (oo-er) or have the whole clan round for the



Christmas dinner with all the trimmings? You'll need to do two hours of running to burn off the extra calories



Six Quality Street chocolates will give you around 260 calories

holidays, a bit of a living room boogie will work wonders for offsetting the seasonal stress and sluggishness. It might feel a bit daft at first if you're not used to letting your hair down, but what have you got to lose? (Well, those extra festive calories for a start...) And, do you know what? We bet you'll be laughing by the end.

Big Christmas dinner with all the trimmings – 1,500 kcals

Burn it off – Two-hours of running (or lots of regular exercise!)

It takes a fair bit of effort to burn off the average Christmas dinner, when portion

control goes out the window and many of us eat until we need to lie down and undo our waistbands. It is possible to burn 1,500 kcals in one workout, but attempting that isn't really a good idea unless you're already very active and used to that level of intensity. A better approach, for most, would be to aim to do regular, moderate-vigorous exercise such as an hour-long friendly football match in the park with mates, where you put effort into sprinting to the ball, an indoor cycling class, bootcamp class or a parkrun.

Another option to get heart rate up is



A glass of bucks fizz is around 10 minutes of skipping

manual labour – shovelling snow, gardening, clearing out the garage or vacuuming the house.

Christmas pudding with custard and/or brandy butter – approx 900 kcals

Burn it off – one-hour fast swim

Low-impact, and therefore gentle on joints, accessible and often suitable for those living with disabilities or chronic pain conditions too, swimming really is a fantastic form of exercise. If you can't manage a fast, one-hour swim, simply break it down to regular, manageable chunks.

Boxer Gary's festive display is a knockout

SANTA has a special spot in Walsall this Christmas and has already been visited by hundreds of children from miles away.

Professional boxer Gary Groves has turned his home on Bagnall Street into a winter wonderland with over 4,600 lights and inflatable sleighs filling his front garden.

He offers parents the chance of taking their children to see Santa and getting into the Christmas mood, all for free. He is helped to spread the Christmas cheer by his son, Thomas, who is five.

They are also helped by Mr Groves' wife, Tracy, 39. Among the gifts children can get on their visit, every one gets a Christmas card and sweets.

Mr Groves, who is 47, said: "We have had hundreds of kids already. When we were kids we grew up with this magical world of Santa and a lot of people around aren't brought up like that now. If you can plant this seed now, they will become better people. There is that much hatred in the world and people charging extortionate prices to see Santa. Everyone can come here and they all get to see Santa and it's not going to cost them a penny."

Mr Groves declined to say how much the display costs him to put on every year. He said: "It's my thing. It doesn't matter to anyone else. It's about kids coming here and it's free. I've done all the house up and my son comes out until about 7.30pm as a little elf."

The lights will be up at the house in Leamore until December 27 and are currently on daily from about 4.30pm until 10pm. Parents and children from as far away as Kingstanding, Wolverhampton and Cannock have visited Walsall to see the display and Santa. This year is the tenth Mr Groves has lit up his home.



Gary Groves from Bagnall Street in Walsall, with little helper son Thomas Groves

New appeal on gas conman

POLICE are re-appealing for information following a distraction burglary in Willenhall. The conman struck in Bilston Lane on November 11 at around 2.10pm, claiming he had been sent to carry out work by British Gas.

The 85-year-old woman who resides at the property let the man inside believing he was from British Gas.

The man stole a purse containing cash and a bus pass then left the house. A CCTV image of a man was circulated following the burglary and Thursday a man came forward and he has now been eliminated from police

enquiries. Sergeant Craig Lewis, from Walsall police station, said: "We would like to thank the public for their help in identifying the man in the image."

"He recognised himself and came forward and it has now been established that he has nothing to do with the burglary and has been eliminated from our enquiries."

Anyone who believes they have information is asked to contact Det Con Kevin Cockayne at k.cockayne@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk, or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 and quote crime number 20WS/222582Y/16

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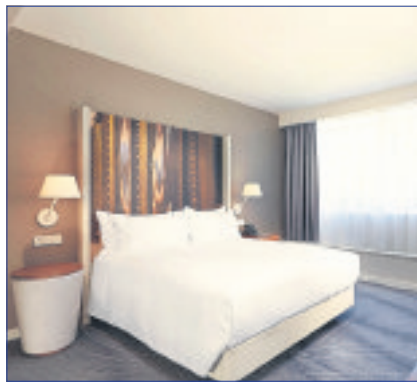
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Old Town on a winter morning in Wrocław, Poland



Rest up – a bedroom at the Doubletree



Hotel heaven – the Doubletree, Wrocław

Cultural city with so many intriguing sights

IT'S a tricky city to pronounce, presuming you've even heard of it, but once you've nailed its name, Wrocław (pronounced Vrots-Vaaff) in southwest Poland, it's easy enough to visit, especially for a short break.

It's less than a two-hour flight from the UK, served direct by budget airlines (airports include Luton, Bristol and Liverpool) and is remarkably good value, with a pint of beer or a cappuccino costing just over £1 each.

Wrocław, presently European Capital of Culture, is itself the capital of the province of Lower Silesia. It's made up of 12 islands, connected by more than 130 bridges and plenty of cycle paths.

I hire a bike from my hotel, the new Doubletree by Hilton, a striking, elliptical building close to the Old Town, and cut through the leafy Slowacki Park to the ivy-covered National Museum overlooking the river Oder.

The museum's home to Silesian paintings, silverware and ceramics, but keen to enjoy the mild autumnal weather, I cycle on, passing pleasure boats, cafes and families out for a stroll.

I pick a bridge – which happens to be Most Piaskowy (Sand Bridge), the oldest in Wrocław – cross over and find myself on Ostrow Tumski (cathedral island), known for its religious buildings, dominated by the twin spires of Wrocław Cathedral. Stone statues of lions flank the entrance.

One is almost worn away; the other is largely intact. I learn later that the former was the statue women would touch if they wanted to be married within a year. The other was for would-be grooms.

I bump over the island's cobbled streets to Tumski Bridge, where romance rears its head again; the bridge's railings are covered in padlocks attached by couples keen to demonstrate everlasting love, by tossing the keys into the river.

Back in the Old Town, I join a walking tour, beginning at The Rynek, a pedestri-

HOLIDAYS

By Karen Bowerman

anised market square, lined with gabled houses with decorative facades and open-air cafes selling traditional Zywiec beer.

Our group's guide, Michal Filarowski, explains the city was largely destroyed during the Second World War, and that none of the medieval-style buildings are original.

As we wander around, I spot two of the city's quirkiest tourist attractions: a couple of bronze dwarfs.

The mischief makers are a nod to the Orange Alternative, an anti-communist movement that used nonsensical slogans to ridicule the regime in the Eighties.

When the authorities painted over anti-government graffiti, the movement painted dwarfs instead.

Papa Krasnal (Papa dwarf), an official monument to the movement, was erected decades later. Soon afterwards, businesses, noting Papa's popularity, created specialist dwarfs of their own.

You'll now find dwarf beauticians, butchers and bakers. I even meet a bespectacled fellow dressed in a striped scarf at the university gates.

I finish with a coffee in the city's indoor market.

Its vaulted ceiling is said to have inspired Wrocław's architectural landmark, the domed 20th century Centennial Hall.

I sit surrounded by fruit, vegetables and massive displays of flowers. But I'm most intrigued by the mushrooms, collected from forests across Lower Silesia.

One stallholder talks me through his offering; there are kurki, borowiki, podgrzybki and prawdziwki – all delicious, but utterly unpronounceable, of course!

● **Doubletree by Hilton opened its doors in August. There are 189 rooms, many overlooking the city's Slowacki Park. Standard doubles cost from £79 per night including breakfast when booking direct at www.wroclaw.doubletree.com**



Pole position – attractive buildings fronting Medieval Solny Square in The Rynek

Dog-lovers can take a break with their pooch



Visit Tewkesbury Park with your four-legged friend

SET in 163 acres of majestic parkland, commanding views of the Cotswolds countryside and beyond, Tewkesbury Park has the perfect backdrop for dogs to accompany their owners for a well-earned break.

Undulating grounds mean dogs are in doggie heaven. With this in mind, the team at the hotel have created a new Canine Retreat Experience, ideal for guests who don't wish to leave their trusty friend in a kennel.

Priced at £199, the Canine Retreat includes:

- A welcome pack in a dog-friendly room with doggie treats, a luxury Hunt & Wilson dog bed, suggested walks and tailored information
- Traditional afternoon tea
- Three-course dinner for two in the Piano Lounge, along with a "Dog's Dinner" prepared by chef for the pampered pooch
- £25 spa gift voucher (per room)
- Overnight accommodation with full use of all the leisure facilities
- Full English breakfast and dogs will receive a sausage or two

All dog-friendly rooms have patio doors, opening directly onto the hotel's grounds, with dog bins placed directly outside the room – perfect for any mid-night toilet emergencies!

Leisure

Tewkesbury Park recently completed an extensive two-year renovation at a cost of £4 million, with the brand new addition of nine luxury historic suites, two new spa rooms, two meeting rooms, an orangery and a cocktail lounge.

The main foyer, reception, communal areas and guestrooms have been completely refurbished.

Tewkesbury Park's leisure facilities include an 18-hole par 73 parkland golf course and academy course, as well as an extensive Leisure Club with a swimming pool, gym, squash and tennis courts, sauna and steam room.

Tewkesbury Park is only five minutes from M5 junction nine, on the doorstep of Tewkesbury and within easy reach of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Worcester.

For information and reservations, please call 01684 295 405, or email reservations@tewkesburypark.co.uk, or visit www.tewkesburypark.co.uk

Meanwhile, The Kennel Club, the UK's largest dog welfare organisation, has launched a new free online service that will enable dog lovers to find a range of shows and dog events in their area, including breed specific shows, agility, heelwork to music, rally and obedience, using a simple postcode search or breed search to find events featuring specific breeds of dog.

The Find a Dog Show service is available at www.findadogshow.org.uk or www.thekennelclub.org.uk



In a spin over Christmas shopping? Snap up a park pass



Fun for all ages at Drayton Manor Theme Park

THOSE struggling to find the perfect Christmas present need look no further as Drayton Manor Park's 2017 Season Pass is now available to purchase online.

It's the gift that keeps on giving because with a Drayton Manor Season Pass or Season Pass Plus you can create a year to remember and experience the fun, thrills and delights all year round for just a fraction of the price. Plus be the first to know of the latest events, competitions and offers throughout the year.

The 2017 Season Pass costs £70 for those aged 4+ and £40 for those aged 2-3 years and provides unlimited access to the park from March 30 to October 27.

The Season Pass Plus costs £100 aged 4+ and £55 for those aged 2-3

years and provides unlimited access to the park from March 30, 2017, to February 26, 2018, including February half term 2018.

It also provides access to the hugely popular Firework Spectacular weekend and unlimited access to the award winning Magical Christmas event with one Father Christmas experience per season pass holder.

Both passes offer 20 per cent off in all park catering and retail outlets, 20 per cent off at the Grill Inn and hotel restaurants plus friends and family offers throughout the season and access to exclusive competitions, news, events and offers.

To book or for more information about the park, visit www.draytonmanor.co.uk or call 0844 472 1950.

For regular updates and news

about Drayton Manor Park, join it on Twitter www.twitter.com/Draytonmanor and Facebook www.facebook.com/DraytonManorPark

Season passes are subject to availability. Access is not available on park buyout days or days that the park is closed (season pass holders will be notified via email of any dates but please check the website for full list of opening times and dates).

The park will be closed to the public on specific dates, please see website for details. Prices only valid if purchased before December 24.

Pre-booking is essential for some events, subject to availability. For more information visit: www.draytonmanor.co.uk/tickets-and-prices/seasonpass

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One thousand of us a year hurt ourselves while hanging decorations



Christmas dinner is a big deal, but so is lacerating your fingers when carving the turkey

Eat, drink and be merry – without a trip to A&E

By Ella Walker

AS you unbox your baubles in December and untangle your fairy lights for the umpteenth time, bear in mind that many of us will have an accident while hanging decorations this year.

A sobering thought given that Christmas is the season to be merry and have a drink or two (or three). But, warns the NHS, it's also a time fraught with stress and worry, which can spill over and cause accidents.

Here are some top festive accidents you should be aware of – and avoid...

HELL'S KITCHEN

Christmas dinner is a big deal, but so is lacerating your fingers when carving the turkey, or burning your forearms when rushing to get the Yorkshire's out of the oven. Take it slow, don't let children in the kitchen and stay alert (i.e. go easy on the chef's obligatory tipple).

STAIRFALL

In a hurry to open your presents? Don't go head over heels in your mad dash to unwrap them, and then don't pile them up on the stairs after you've found out. They'll just trip someone else up, and a broken neck is not a great present, ever.

HEELY BAD LUCK

Paul Kennedy, senior physiotherapist at Nuffield Health, says: "If you're not used to them, try to spend as little time in high heels as possible, as this causes your pelvis to tilt and places unnecessary strain on the lower back. Limit wearing them to a couple of hours at a time and always wear flats to and from a party or event."

DECKED OUT

According to The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), 1,000 of us a year hurt ourselves while hanging decorations. Beware the baubles!

WATCH YOUR BACK

Kennedy says: "When carrying large bags of shopping or presents, spread the load to prevent injuring your back. Carry bags in each hand, make multiple trips to the car and get your food shop delivered to your door."

TOTALLY SHOCKING

If you manage to successfully hang your fairy lights without coming a cropper on a ladder, don't go getting electrocuted. Test your lights for faults before hanging them, just to be on the safe side.

CUT IT OUT

Ah scissors, that old menace. They're sharp, remember?! Kennedy adds: "When wrapping presents, sit at the table with your paper, tape and scissors close by, to prevent twisting the spine."

THE GREAT REVEAL

Scissors DO NOT make good substitutes for screwdrivers, and screwdrivers are not toys. Try buying gifts that don't involve



When wrapping presents, sit at the table with your paper, tape and scissors close by, to prevent twisting the spine



Candles are lovely, but make sure you blow them out properly



Test your lights for faults before hanging them

batteries or parts that need screwing together, it'll be far easier.

ICE AND EASY

Kennedy says: "Make sure you take extra care and wear sensible shoes if you're rushing about, especially during icy and snowy conditions or after you've had a mulled wine and are more likely to slip or injure

yourself."

BOOZE CRUISE

Yep, Buck's Fizz in the morning, wine all day, Bailey's in the evening – it all adds up, leaving you less aware of your surroundings and more prone to trips, slips and uncomfortable outbursts. Moderation should be your keyword for the big day.

CANDLE CARE

It's a fact that people are 50 per cent more likely to die in a house fire over Christmas than at any other time of year. Keep candles away from curtains, Christmas trees and decorations, and always make sure you blow them out properly when you've finished using them.

Cheesy and delicious dish ideal for guests

COOKING for a vegetarian this Christmas? This cheesy dish would be ideal.

GOAT'S CHEESE SPINACH FLAN

Ingredients (serves 8)

- For the pastry
- 225g plain flour
- Pinch salt
- 1/2tsp dried mixed herbs
- 115g butter, diced
- 50g cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1-2tbsp milk
- For the filling
- 200g potatoes, diced
- 1tbsp vegetable oil
- 140g onions, thinly sliced
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 85g frozen spinach, defrosted
- 2tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1tbsp fresh sage, chopped
- 1tsp balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 Granny Smith or small Bramley apple, peeled, cored and diced
- 125g pack goat's cheese, diced
- 125ml double cream
- 100ml milk, 4 eggs
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Salad or mixed vegetables, to serve



Method

1. Butter a 23cm loose-bottomed, fluted tart tin.
2. To make the pastry case, add the flour, salt, herbs and butter to a bowl and rub in until the mixture looks like fine crumbs. Stir in the cheese, then mix in the egg and enough milk to make a smooth, soft dough.
3. Lightly knead the pastry, then roll out on a lightly-floured surface until a little larger than the tart tin. Lift the pastry over a rolling pin and press into the tin. Trim the top of the pastry a little above the top of the tin, to allow for shrinkage, prick the base with a fork then chill for 30 minutes.
4. Preheat the oven to 190C/gas mark 5. Line the tart case with a circle of non-stick baking paper and baking beans, then bake for 10 minutes. Remove the paper and beans and cook for five more minutes, until the base is crisp and dry. Set aside.
5. Meanwhile, make the filling. Add the potatoes to a saucepan of boiling water and cook for four to five minutes (until just tender) and drain.
6. Heat the oil in a frying pan, add the onion and garlic and fry over a medium heat for five to 10 minutes, until softened and lightly-coloured.
7. Add the spinach to a sieve and press out the water with the back of a spoon. Stir into the onions then mix in the parsley, sage and balsamic vinegar. Fry gently until the mix starts to dry, then take off the heat.
8. Spoon half the spinach mix into the base of the tart case. Scatter the potatoes, apple and remaining spinach mix into the tart, then top

with the goat's cheese.

9. Whisk the cream, milk, eggs and a little salt and pepper together in a jug then pour into the tart.
10. Bake at 180C/gas mark 4 for 35-40 minutes, until the top is golden brown and the filling is set.
11. Leave to stand for up to 10 minutes before removing from the tin and slicing. Serve with vegetables or salad.

From The National Trust Cookbook published by National Trust Books, priced £20

BANANA ICE CREAM

Ingredients

- 3 bananas
- 150ml of Greek yoghurt
- 3 tablespoons of sweetener
- 1 tablespoon of honey, 1 tablespoon of cinnamon
- 1 tsp of vanilla bean paste
- Fresh fruit to garnish

Method

1. Chop your bananas into even-sized chunks and place in the freezer for an hour to 90 minutes.
 2. Take them out and put them into a food processor with your yoghurt, honey, vanilla bean paste and cinnamon.
 3. Keep blending the mixture until smooth and creamy.
 4. Place back in the freezer for another hour to 90 minutes.
 5. Scoop it into a bowl and top with fresh fruit.
- Recipe by DW Fitness Clubs**

fast theticket

Evil delights

'Phil' plots a
wicked End-er
See Page 23



**NATIVE
MONSTER**
Entertainment Unleashed



Sweet music

See Page ??

For full listings see **Express & Star** every Friday

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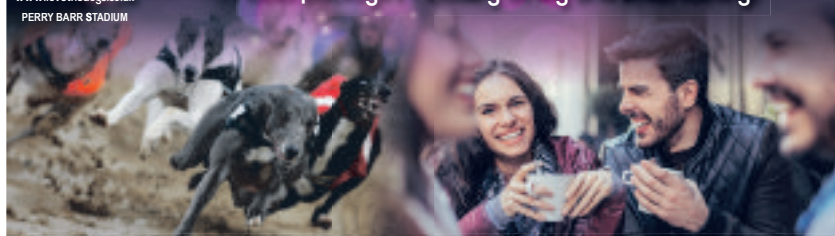
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Wednesday, 7pm
02 Institute, Birmingham
Tickets sold out a while ago for the return of the 2012 X Factor champion who has won over new fans with his Back From The Edge album.
Visit academymusicgroup.com/o2institutebirmingham

Festive Favourites



Friday and Monday, 7.30pm,
Sunday, 3.30pm, 7.30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham
Actress Jessica Hynes (pictured) presents a series of Christmas concerts featuring the CBSO's various choral groups, conducted by Simon Halsey.
Visit tsh.co.uk

Tinned Astronaut



Saturday, 7pm
Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton
Wolftown put on another showcase of the best new bands in the city, including Tinned Astronaut. Black and the Chilliholders, Second Hand Genes, HDS and Runaway Hounds.
Visit wolvescivic.co.uk

Katherine Jenkins



Thursday, 7.30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham
The celebrated Welsh soprano joins the London Concert Orchestra for a celebration with songs from her recent album celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday plus festive favourites.
Visit tsh.co.uk

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The River Rooms, Stourbridge, DY8 1JN.
Call 01384 397 177
Or 07986 577 661

Traditional Christmas Evenings
Tonight - Sun,
The Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, DY1 4SQ.
Call 01215 579643

Festive Favourites
Tonight, Sun - Mon, various
Birmingham Symphony Hall,
The International Convention Centre, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

Roving Canal Traders Floating Christmas Market
Today - tomorrow,
Barclaycard Arena, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Christmas Charity Concert with Birmingham Festival Choral Society
Tomorrow,
Ladywood ARC, Birmingham, B16 8TF.
Call 0121 4540973

Christmas Crafts
Tomorrow,
Sandwell Valley Nature Reserve, West Bromwich, B43 5AG.
Call 0121 357 7395

Christmas storytelling in the house
Tomorrow,
Croome Court, High Green, Worcester, WR8 9DW.
Call 01905 371006

Christmas Ramble
Sun,
Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.
Call 01952 852100

Solihull Photographic Society - Christmas Knock Out
Tue,
Solihull Women's Institute, B91 3DQ.
Call 07815 165438

Carols and Sunday Lunch
Sun,
Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.
Call 01952 852100

Christmas Crafts
Sun,
Sandwell Valley Nature Reserve, West Bromwich, B43 5AG.
Call 0121 357 7395

Woodland Father Christmas
Sun,
Clent Hills, B62 0NL.
Call 01562 712 822

Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music by Candlelight
Mon - Wed,
St. Pauls Church, St. Pauls Square, Birmingham, B3 1QZ.
Call 0121 236 7858

Andy Williams Christmas Extravaganza 2016 starring The Osmonds
Thu,
Malvern Theatres, WR14 3HB.
Call 01684 892277

Fred Zeppelin Xmas Bash
Thu, £10 - £12
The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

ROCK & METAL

Hells Bells - the UK's best AC/DC tribute
Tonight, £8 - £9
The RoadHouse Birmingham, Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

Bowie Experience
Tonight,
Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3AD.
Call 0844 871 7649

Status Quo: The Last Night of the Electrics
Tonight,
Barclaycard Arena, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Dark Side Of The Wall - a tribute to Pink Floyd
Tomorrow, £8 - £10
The RoadHouse Birmingham, Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

Madness
Tomorrow,
Barclaycard Arena, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Wolftown ft. Tinned Astronaut + others
Tomorrow,
The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, WV1 1HP.
Call 01902 552122

The Stones
Tonight,
Theatre on the Steps, Bridgnorth, WV16 4BD.
Call 01746 766477

Touchstone - Christmas Bash
Sun, £17.50 - £20
The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

The Sweet featuring Andy Scott
Mon, £20 - £22.50
The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

The Hair Rock Experience
Thu, £5
The RoadHouse Birmingham, Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

FOLK, COUNTRY & ACOUSTIC

Kit Hawes & Aaron Catlow
Tonight,
SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, SY9 5AY.
Call 01588 630321 or 01588 638038

Hollis & Hawkes Live Acoustic Set
Tonight,
Six Eight Cafe, Birmingham, B2 5HG.
Call 0121 448 8089

Traditional Music Session
Sun,
The Prince of Wales Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8EE.
Call 0121 4494198

JAZZ, SOUL, BLUES, MOTOWN & REGGAE

Red Lemon Electric Blues Band
Tonight,
Stourbridge Town Hall, DY8 1YE.
Call 01384 812960

Soul City
Sun, £18
The RoadHouse Birmingham, Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

Urban Intro
Mon - Wed, £5 - £10
The Jam House, Birmingham, B31QU.
Call 0121 200 3030

Jazz Tuesdays
Tue,
Spotted Dog, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0NH.
Call 0121 772 3822

Detroit Soul
Thu,
The Jam House, Birmingham, B31QU.
Call 0121 200 3030

POP

Spice Girls Tribute Night at Bel Air Nightclub
Tonight - Thu,
The Belfry Hotel & Resort, Wishaw, Sutton Coldfield, B76 9PR.
Call 0844 980 0600

Showaddywaddy
Tomorrow, £20 - £22
The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

Sunday Classics
Sun,
Spotted Dog, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0NH.
Call 0121 772 3822

James Arthur
Wed, 7pm
02 Institute, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DY.
Call 0121 437 4150

CLASSICAL

Stourport Choral Society
Wed,
Areyley Kings Village Hall, Areyley Common, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 0NB.
Call 07939 318973

Katherine Jenkins
Thu, 7pm
Birmingham Symphony Hall, The International Convention Centre, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

COMEDY

Ken Dodd - Happiness Show
Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3AD.
Call 0844 871 7649

King Kong Comedy Club
Thu,
Gunmakers Arms, Birmingham, B4 6HG.
Call 0121 236 8486

THEATRE

Robin Hood: The Panto
Tue - tomorrow,
Ludlow Assembly Rooms, SY8 1AZ.
Call 01584 878141

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Tonight, £8 - £16
Number 8 Community Arts Centre, Pershore WR10 1BG.
Call 01386 555028

Treasure Island
Tonight - Thu,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Library of Birmingham, B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

Chicago The Musical
Tonight - Thu,
New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

Faulty Towers The Dining Experience
Tonight - tomorrow, £50
Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Library of Birmingham, B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

A Christmas Carol
Tonight - tomorrow,
The Crescent Theatre, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B16 8AE.
Call 0121 643 5858

Aladdin
Tonight - tomorrow,
Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham, B27 7RY.
Call 0121 707 1874

Robin Rood: The Panto (relaxed performance)
Sun, £5 - £22
Ludlow Assembly Rooms, SY8 1AZ.
Call 01584 878141

The Muppet Christmas Carol (film screening)
Sun,
New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

Bolshoi: The Nutcracker
Sun, £11.20 - £13.44
Malvern Theatres, WR14 3HB.
Call 01684 892277

A Christmas Wassail 2016
Sun - Tue,
The Crescent Theatre, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B16 8AE.
Call 0121 643 5858

Snow White - The World's Biggest Pantomime
Mon - Thu,
Barclaycard Arena, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Dick Whittington
Mon - Thu,
Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB.
Call 0844 338 5000

Moscow State Circus
Tue - Thu,
Star City, Birmingham, B7 5SA.
Call 0121 270 4455

ARTS & CULTURE

Furs, Fire and Ice
Tonight,
Dewalls Court, Dewalls, Hereford, HR2 8DA.
Call 01432 276 724

The Roaring 20s Party
Tonight - Sun, Thu,
The International Convention Centre, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
Call 0121 200 2000

Short Introductory Talk: Help & Healing on the Spiritual Path through the teaching of Bruno Groening
Tomorrow, Free
The Polish Millenium Centre, Birmingham, B5 5PH.
Call 0121 643 3577

Cellar Tour
Erasmus Darwin House, Lichfield, WS13 7AD.
Call 01543 306260

Whyley Dance
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Areyley Kings Village Hall, Areyley Common, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 0NB.
Call 07939 318973

Chance to Dance
Thu,
Areyley Kings Village Hall, Areyley Common, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 0NB.
Call 07939 318973

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

EastEnders caught acting bug in Brum

STEVE 'Phil Mitchell' McFadden is a total rat. He's a dirty rat. He's King Rat.

From Monday to January 29 he'll be hamming it up with John Barrowman, comedy duo The Krankies, comedian Matt Slack, Over The Rainbow winner Danielle Hope and I'd Do Anything winner Jodie Prenger in Birmingham's biggest panto.

Audiences can expect plenty of laughs, outrageous costumes, wonderful sets and scenery, and some amazing special effects in Dick Whittington.

"It'll be good fun," he says. "I cut my teeth in panto working with Matt Slack. We're good mates. We hang out together and go for drinks. He's been on EastEnders as well."

Steve, Matt and co have spent several weeks getting the show in shape. Steve's professional career has mostly centred in London. He hails from Maida Vale, learned how to act at Rada and played EastEnders hardman Phil Mitchell at the BBC's London studios. Birmingham, however, may well have put him on the road to his acting career.

Back in the 1970s he visited the Second City regularly to flog perfume and jewellery as he tried to earn a few bob as a Del Boy-style market trader.

"I used to work with my dad on the walkway to the Bull Ring," he says. "We used to park the old Austin Morris and have a bit of kit in the back. Then we'd do the walkway. I just remember this big wide concourse and we'd sell out every time."

"If it was raining in London we'd come up at the weekend and sell in



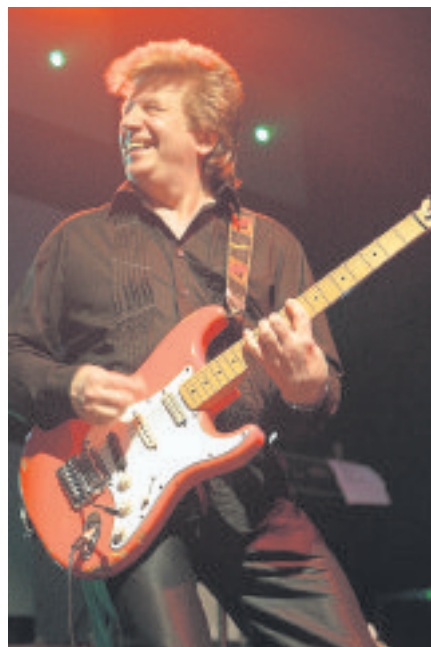
Steve 'Phil Mitchell' McFadden with Hippodrome panto co-star and pal Matt Slack

Birmingham instead. We'd smash it and we'd have a good laugh with the people."

The gear was straight up guv. Honest. And working as an out-of-the-suitcase trader helped turn Steve onto acting.

"We had a bit of a Del Boy thing

with my dad and his partner. We'd turn the milk crates upside down and sell off the top. I'd always have a laugh with the Brummies. In many ways, that was my first steps into acting, the first time I was dealing with the public face-to-face. I got confident doing that."



Sweet 70s memories

BLOCKBUSTER! Hellraiser. Teenage Rampage. Ballroom Blitz... solid gold glam rock 1970s hits that put The Sweet on Top Of The Pops and the cover of teenybopper mags more than 40 years ago.

Sweet are back on the road with original guitarist and co-singer Andy Scott (pictured left), including a gig at Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Monday. Original lead singer Brian Connolly died in 1997. Andy Scott's version of the band features lead vocals from bassist Pete Lincoln, who previously worked with Shakin' Stevens and Sir Cliff Richard. The band also features two former members of melodic hard rock outfit Praying Mantis, keyboards/guitarist Tony O'Hara and drummer Bruce Bisland.

Sweet are also special guests at the Bay City Rollers' Shang-a-Lang-a-Xmas Show at Wolverhampton Civic Hall tonight (Thursday), featuring original Rollers Les McKeown, Alan Longmuir and Stuart Wood.

The Sweet's 70s Black Country rivals Slade, featuring originals Dave Hill and Don Powell, have sold out their 'Ome Town gig at the Robin tomorrow (Friday).

Fans of rock 'n' roll can join 70s hitmakers, Showaddywaddy, at the Robin on Saturday. The retro outfit had ten top five hits - Hey Rock and Roll, Under the Moon of Love, When, You Got What It Takes, Three Steps to Heaven, Heartbeat, I Wonder Why, Dancin' Party, A Little Bit of Soap, and Pretty Little Angel Eyes. Ex-singer Dave Bartram has been the band's manager for 30 years and Andy Pelos took over as lead singer five years ago. The group features original members Romeo Challenger and Rod Deas.

Region's rockers in showcase gigs

CHECK out young bands tipped to break out of the West Midlands scene in 2017 at the showcase gig run by Baddies Boogie at the 02 Institute in Digbeth tomorrow night (Friday).

The five band line up in The Blue Room features Kung Fu Rin Tin Tin plus Brum outfit State, Wolverhampton four-piece Shush, Kidderminster's Plastic Scene and the Black Country's Rebellion.

It's the same night Wolverhampton powerhouse rock trio God Dam have a late finishing gig at the Hare and Hounds pub in Kings Heath. Also on that bill are Johnny Foreigner, Youth Man, False Grails and Matters.

Red hot and blue with the Lemons

RED Lemons Electric Blues Band, one of the top live bands in the Black Country and Brum back in the '80s, have got the band back together for another reunion concert.

Following the success of last year's 30 year reunion shows, the Red Lemons are going to bring their good time R&B and soul back to Stourbridge Town Hall tomorrow night (Friday).

The band fronted by Big Jim Merris has celebrity fans including brief former member Adrian Chiles and Suzi Perry. The gig is on its way to being a sell-out. Tickets cost £22, on 0870 320 7000, or see www.dudley.gov.uk/entertainment-website.

Jungle Joel jokes at Slade Rooms

COMEDIAN and actor Joel Dommett will bring his new show to Wolverhampton next year. The runner-up in this year's I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here, will perform at the Slade Rooms on March 2.

Starting out on the comedy scene in 2007, the 30-year-old has gone onto receive critical acclaim for his Edinburgh Fringe shows and in numerous television shows.

Meanwhile, satirical comedian Andy Zaltman brings his Plan Z to the same Broad Street venue on February 24.

For tickets call 0870 320 7000, or email boxoffice@wolvescivic.co.uk.

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CHOICE



Darcey Bussell

Strictly Come Dancing (BBC1, 6.40pm)

Over the past 13 weeks, we've experienced highs, lows and Ed Balls performing a salsa to Gangnam Style, but hopefully Strictly has still got some surprises in store as the remaining celebrity finalists face one last ballroom battle to see who will be lifting the famous trophy. Some viewers pegged Danny Mac as the winner following his impressive week one cha cha cha, but we could be in for an upset as the stars perform three routines—their favourite number from the series, the judges' choice (which in previous years has usually been one the celebrity didn't quite nail to see if they can improve) and the no-holds-barred showdance. There'll also be group number, a performance by Emeli Sande.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** James Martin – Home Comforts at Christmas. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Sports Personality 2016: The Contenders. (R) **2.15** Bargain Hunt. **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.30** BBC News. **5.40** Regional Programme. **5.50** Pointless Celebrities.

6.40 Strictly Come Dancing. Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman host the live grand final, which sees the remaining three celebrities and their partners performing three routines each – a spectacular showdance, a routine from the series chosen by the judges and the one routine they hope will help them lift the glitterball trophy. Len Goodman, Bruno Tonioli, Craig Revel Horwood and Darcey Bussell give their comments and score the performances, but they are for guidance only – the decision as to who waltzes off with this year's title is strictly down to the viewers' vote. Last in the series.

8.55 Michael McIntyre's Big Show. Jack Whitehall joins Michael on stage at London's Theatre Royal on Drury Lane, along with Sting, who performs some of his classic hits, and music from his new album 57th & 9th. Plus, Ricky Gervais's insufferable middle-manager-turned-musician David Brent makes a special appearance. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver risks the ire of his friends and family as Michael seizes his phone in Send To All, and two people from the same family receive the surprise of their lives in Unexpected Star.

9.55 BBC News; Weather.

10.15 The National Lottery Live. The all-important winning numbers are revealed.

10.25 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Crystal Palace v Chelsea and West Bromwich Albion v Manchester United; National Lottery Update.

11.45 The NFL Show. Mark Chapman looks at the major stories shaping the NFL world, joined by former Super Bowl winners Osi Umenyiora and Jason Bell.

12.15 Film: Old School. (2003) **1.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.50 Film: Holiday Affair. (1949) **8.15 Film:** The Bishop's Wife. (1947) **10.00** This Farming Life. (R) **11.00** This Farming Life. (R) **12.00** Wild Japan. (R) **1.00** Wild Japan. (R) **2.00** Wild Japan. (R) **3.00 Film:** The Odd Life of Timothy Green. (2012) Fantasy, starring Jennifer Garner. **4.35 Film:** Nativity 2: Danger in the Manger! (2012) Comedy sequel, starring David Tennant.

6.25 Dad's Army. First-ever episode of the classic comedy, in which bank manager George Mainwaring assembles a motley crew of volunteers to protect Britain from Nazi invasion. Arthur Lowe stars.

6.55 Operation Snow Tiger. Part two of two. Cameraman Max Hug Williams follows a tiger to see if she has new cubs, while Liz Bonnin searches for another female that has gone missing. (R)

7.55 Walt Disney – Part Two. Documentary exploring the life, career and legacy of Walt Disney, presenting a portrait of the animator as an ambitious entrepreneur whose masterpieces defined an industry.

8.55 Film: A Christmas Carol. (2009) A foul-tempered Victorian miser who hates the festive season is visited on Christmas Eve by a series of ghosts. The spirits intend to make him mend his wicked ways by showing him visions of the past, the present and what the future will hold for him if he does not change for the better. Animated fantasy based on Charles Dickens' novel, featuring motion-captured performances by Jim Carrey and Gary Oldman.

10.25 QI XL. Sandi Toksvig quizzes guests Miles Jupp, Deirdre O'Kane and Phill Jupitus and regular panelist Alan Davies on a series of subjects involving non sequiturs in this extended episode.

11.10 Porridge. Fletch discovers fellow inmates at Slade Prison are planning an escape over Christmas. Festive edition from 1975, with Ronnie Barker. (R)

11.50 The Making of Young Men. Documentary going behind the scenes of BalletBoyz' first feature film, a re-working of the company's hugely successful stage production of the same name that premiered in 2015.

12.20 BalletBoyz – Young Men. (R) **1.20 Film:** Chances Are. (1989) **3.05** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **7.00** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **8.20** Dino Dan: Trex's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.40** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.25** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.30** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Do! **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30 Film:** Carry On Follow That Camel. (1967) Comedy, with Jim Dale. **11.20** Judge Rinder. (R) **12.25** ITV News; Weather. **12.35** This Time Next Year. (R) **1.35 Film:** Mr Magorium's Wonder Emporium. (2007) Fantasy comedy, starring Dustin Hoffman and Natalie Portman. **3.20** Thunderbirds Are Go. **3.45** Regional Programme.

4.00 ITV News; Weather. **4.15 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. (2001) Fantasy adventure, starring Elijah Wood.

7.30 Film: The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey. (2012) Unassuming hobbit Bilbo Baggins is pulled out of his comfortable life when Gandalf the wizard volunteers him for a dangerous quest. He joins a party of dwarves who are on a mission to reclaim their lost homeland, which has been taken over by a dragon. When the group journeys into the Misty Mountains, Bilbo becomes separated from the dwarves and falls into a cave, where he finds himself confronted by Gollum and forced to play a riddle game. It is set in Middle-earth 60 years before the events of The Lord of the Rings and is the first part of Peter Jackson's fantasy adventure trilogy based on J.R.R. Tolkien's novel, starring Martin Freeman, Ian McKellen, Richard Armitage, James Nesbitt, Ken Stott, Cate Blanchett, Ian Holm and Christopher Lee.

10.40 ITV News; Weather.

10.55 Film: Private Benjamin. (1980) A society widow enlists in the army in the hope of finding a new direction, but comes into conflict with her tough commanding officer. Comedy, with Goldie Hawn and Armand Assante.

12.55 Jackpot247. Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team.

3.00 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Three Peaks Yacht Race. **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** The Morning Line. **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.15** The Simpsons. (R) **11.45 Film:** The Dog Who Saved the Holidays. (2012) Premiere. Comedy sequel, starring Shelley Long. **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Ascot and Haydock Park. **4.05** The Simpsons. (R) **4.35** The Simpsons. (R) **5.05** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas. (R) **5.40 Film:** Arthur Christmas. (2011) Animated comedy, with the voice of James McAvoy.

7.30 Channel 4 News.

8.00 Tree of the Year with Ardal O'Hanlon. The comedian and former Father Ted actor visits some of the UK's most remarkable trees, before revealing the winners of the Woodland Trust's prestigious Tree of the Year awards from a 28-strong shortlist. Each winning specimen from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is then put to a panel of experts, who select just one of the four to take the overall title of UK Tree of the Year.

9.00 It Was Alright in the 1970s. Matt Lucas narrates this look at the programmes that flirted with danger during the decade, including Blue Peter, which carried on filming as a fire broke out live on air, while The Fun of the Fair showed teenage girls riding motorcycles through burning hoops. At the same time government-produced public information films petrified viewers with scary scenarios of possible accidents in the home. Contributors include Robin Askwith, Liza Goddard, Oona King, Olive Anderson, Phillipa Perry, Samira Ahmed, Ellie Taylor and Angela Barnes.

10.00 Film: Escape Plan. (2013) A security expert is incarcerated after being duped and tries to break out with the help of a fellow convict. Thriller, with Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

12.15 Film: The Guest. (2014) **2.00** Bear's Wild Weekend with Jonathan Ross. (R) **2.50** The Last Leg. (R) **3.45** Hollyoaks. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.15** The Gadget Show. (R) **11.15 Film:** A Cinderella Christmas. (2016) **1.05 Film:** Christmas Cookies. (2016) Premiere. Romantic drama, starring Jill Wagner and Wes Brown. **2.50 Film:** Love Always, Santa. (2016) Premiere. Festive romance, starring Marguerite Moreau. **4.35 Film:** Christmas Under Wraps. (2014) Premiere. Drama, starring Candace Cameron Bure.

6.25 Film: Space Cowboys. (2000) A former Air Force test pilot, who was sidelined from space exploration because of his difficult character, is recruited 40 years later to help America's post-Cold War Russian allies. Teaming up with three fellow veteran airmen, he uses his expertise in navigation to stop a malfunctioning Soviet satellite from crashing to Earth. Adventure, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. With Tommy Lee Jones, James Garner, Donald Sutherland and James Cromwell. Includes 5 News at 7.25pm. Edited for language.

9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Burton Albion v Newcastle United at the Pirelli Stadium, Birmingham City v Brighton & Hove Albion at the AMEX Stadium and Blackburn Rovers v Reading at Ewood Park.

10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce all the goals from the weekend's games in the Leagues One and Two, including Scunthorpe United v Millwall.

10.30 The Funny Thing About Christmas. A selection of comedians and comedians, including Anthea Turner, Vanessa Feltz, Carl Fogarty and Kerry Godliman, discuss everything they love and loathe about the festive season.

11.30 Greatest Ever Christmas Songs. A celebratory compilation of some of the biggest festive songs over the last 50 years, featuring a wide variety of artists including the Poggies, Johnny Mathis and the Darkness.

1.25 SuperCasino. **3.10** All New Traffic Cops. (R) **4.00** The Secret Life of Puppies: Terrible Twos. (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Queen Elizabeth I: A Timewatch Guide. **8.00** Last Journey of the Magna Carta King. **9.00** Modus. **10.30** Top of the Pops: 1982. **12.00** Agnetha: Abba and After. **1.00** Kings of 70s Romance. **2.00** Burt Bacharach: A Life in Song. **3.30** Close

ITV2

11.35 Catchphrase Celebrity Special. **12.35** You've Been Framed! at Christmas. **1.35** Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas. **2.35** Film: Peter Pan (2003). **3.35** FYI Daily. **3.40** Film: Peter Pan (2003). **4.45** Film: Snow Dogs (2002). **7.00** You've Been Framed! at Christmas. **8.00** Scorpion. **9.00** Film: A Very Harold & Kumar Christmas (2011). **10.50** Family Guy. **12.15** Morn 12.40 American Dad! **1.10** Film: Bring It On (2000). **3.00** Teleshopping.

ITV3

1.50 Foyle's War. **3.50** Midsomer Murders. **5.55** Midsomer Murders: Ghosts of Christmas Past. **8.00** Doc Martin. **9.00** The Booze Cruise III. **11.00** Inspector Morse. **1.15** Wycliffe. **2.10** ITV3 Nightscreen. **2.30** Teleshopping.

ITV4

12.40 Film: The Great Outdoors (1988). **1.45** FYI Daily. **1.50** Film: The Great Outdoors (1988). **2.30** Film: Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (1989). **3.30** FYI Daily. **3.35** Film: Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (1989). **4.15** Film: Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey (1991). **5.15** FYI Daily. **5.30** Film: Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey (1991). **6.10** Film: On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969). **7.15** FYI Daily. **7.20** Film: On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969). **9.00** Film: The Specialist (1994). **11.10** Film: Inside Man (2006). **12.15** FYI Daily. **12.20** Film: Inside Man (2006). **1.50** Hell on Wheels. **2.45** Movies Now. **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen. **3.00** Teleshopping.

E4

11.05 Melissa & Joey. **1.00** Black-ish. **2.00** Film: Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2010). **4.00** The Goldbergs. **5.30** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** Film: The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1 (2011). **11.20** Gogglebox. **1.25** Rude Tube. **2.30** The Inbetweeners. **3.25** New Girl. **5.00** Revenge.

Film4

11.00 Black Nativity (2013). **1.00** Step Up (2006). **3.05** Carry On Regardless (1961). **4.55** Chalet Girl. (2011). **6.50** Men in Black 3 (2012). **9.00** Bridesmaids (2011). **11.25** Devil's Due (2014). **1.10** Terminator Salvation (2009). **3.30** Close

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CHOICE



Sports Personality of the Year 2016 (BBC1, 6.40pm)
Gary Lineker, Clare Balding and Gabby Logan present this year's ceremony live from the Genting Arena in Birmingham. Tennis star Andy Murray was presented the prestigious main award in 2015 and is in contention once again after a stellar year that saw him win Wimbledon, claim his second Olympic gold medal and remarkably overhaul Novak Djokovic to end 2016 as world number one. However, he is likely to face stiff competition from other Rio medalists, such as Mo Farah, Laura Kenny and Alistair Brownlee. The Team of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Young Sports Personality of the Year and Unsung Hero awards will also be handed out.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.40** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Fern Britton Meets Rebecca Ferguson. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News. Weather. **1.15** Flog It! (R) **2.10** Elizabeth at 90 – A Family Tribute. (R) **3.40** Planet Earth II. (R) **4.40** Songs of Praise. **5.15** BBC News. **5.30** Regional Programme. **5.40** Countryfile.
6.40 **Sports Personality of the Year 2016.** Gary Lineker, Clare Balding and Gabby Logan present this year's ceremony live from the Genting Arena in Birmingham. Tennis star Andy Murray was presented the prestigious main award in 2015 and is in contention once again after a stellar year that saw him win Wimbledon, claim his second Olympic gold medal and remarkably overhaul Novak Djokovic to end 2016 as world number one.
9.00 **The Apprentice.** After 11 weeks of challenges that have seen the teams selling sweets, crowdfunding and becoming personal shoppers in a leading department store, the final two battle it out to go into partnership with Alan Sugar. Their final task is to launch their businesses and present their ideas to an audience of industry experts at City Hall, London. But they need assistance, so former contenders return to help each finalist as they come up with brands, devise campaigns and make TV adverts. Will the industry bigwigs like their ideas? And who will have done enough to convince Lord Sugar to pick them as his partner? Last in the series.
10.00 **The Apprentice: You're Hired.** Rhod Gilbert is joined by the winner, the runner-up and Lord Sugar himself, as the business tycoon reveals the reasons behind his final decision. Last in the series.
11.00 BBC News.
11.20 Regional Programme.
11.30 **Walliams & Friend.** Meera Syal becomes David Walliams' latest "friend", joining forces with him in a variety of sketches. A number of celebrities also make fleeting appearances. (R)
12.00 Have I Got a Bit More News for You. Gary Lineker hosts an extended edition of the satirical quiz. **12.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.20 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.05** Big Dreams Small Spaces. (R) **8.05** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** Super Powered Owls: Natural World. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** A to Z of Christmas Cooking. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Tom Kerridge Cooks Christmas. (R) **1.30** Equestrian: Olympia 2016. **4.35** Full Steam Ahead. (R) **5.35** Film: The Terminal. (2004) An Eastern European en route to America is stranded after a coup in his homeland. Comedy, starring Tom Hanks and Catherine Zeta-Jones.
7.40 **Victoria Wood as Seen on TV Special.** Comedy sketches written by and starring Victoria Wood, with Julie Walters, Celia Imrie, Duncan Preston and Susie Blake. (R)
8.20 **Best of British: Victoria Wood.** The comedian and writer looks back on her career in a programme originally broadcast in 1998. She reflects on her childhood in 1960s Lancashire and her long and successful career as a performer. Featuring contributions from regular collaborators Julie Walters and Celia Imrie, and famous fans including Celine Dion, Thora Birch and Caroline Aherne. (R)
9.00 **Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas.** A festive special from 2009 that attempts to cram an entire night's Christmas viewing into 60 minutes. Highlights include the Midlife Olympics 2009, popular costume drama Lark Pies to Cranchesterford and the adventures of soap star Bo Beaumont, played by Victoria's long-time collaborator Julie Walters. Others joining in the fun are Della Smith, Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Reese Shearsmith and Anton Du Beke. (R)
10.00 **Victoria Wood: At it Again.** A filmed performance at the Royal Albert Hall, taken from the comedian's 2001 UK tour.
11.30 **Film: Last Christmas Harvey.** (2008) A miserable New Yorker falls for an equally unfulfilled woman he meets while in London to attend his daughter's wedding. Romantic drama, starring Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson.
12.55 Sign Zone. Countryfile. (R) **1.50** Holby City. Essie's feelings towards Parker lead her to make a questionable decision. (R) **2.50** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.25** Scrambled! Scrambled! **7.30** Scrambled! Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled! Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled! The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled! Thunderbirds Are Go. **9.05** Scrambled! Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** Film: All Stars. (2013) **11.20** Let's Do Christmas with Gino & Mel. (R) **12.15** ITV News: Weather. (R) **12.50** Film: The Incredible Hulk. (2008) Comic-book adventure, starring Edward Norton. **2.55** Film: National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. (1989) Comedy, starring Chevy Chase. **4.45** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie. (1985) Family fantasy adventure, starring Dudley Moore.
6.40 **Regional Programme.** Weather. **6.50** ITV News: Weather.
7.00 **All Star Mr & Mrs Christmas Special.** Philip Schofield hosts a special festive edition of the game show, in which celebrity guest couples reveal how much they know about each other – or not, as the case may be. The contestants are Dominic Brunt (Emmerdale's Paddy Kirk) and his wife Jo, boxer Lennox Lewis and his wife violet and T'Pau singer Carol Decker and her husband Richard.
8.00 **Midsomer Murders.** Christmas special of the detective drama. The village of Little Aburn has stood abandoned since the Second World War, but now plans are afoot to restore it to its former glory. However, the grand reopening takes a grisly turn when a man is murdered. DCI Barnaby and his new partner DS Jamie Winter are soon on the case, and must unravel a web of lies connecting past and present to bring the killer to justice. Neil Dudgeon stars, with Nick Hendrix making his debut as Barnaby's latest assistant. Guest starring Hugh Dennis and Sally Phillips.
10.00 **ITV News: Weather.**
10.20 **Film: Hot Fuzz.** (2007) A zealous policeman is relocated to a sleepy country village. Action comedy, starring Simon Pegg.
12.35 Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **6.45** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.10** Frasier. (R) **8.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **8.35** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **9.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Lewis vs Nice: F1 2016. **2.05** Film: Inkheart. (2008) Fantasy adventure, starring Brendan Fraser. **4.10** The Snowman. (R) **4.45** Channel 4 News. **5.10** Film: Cars. (2006) Pixar animated adventure, with the voices of Owen Wilson and Paul Newman.
7.30 **Britain's Wildest Weather.** Footage of unusual weather conditions recorded in Britain during 2016, and exploring the factors that led to these incidents. The programme features footage recorded by people caught in the middle of floods, super-storms, tornadoes and lightning strikes, as well as a look at how a record level El Niño effect altered Britain's weather.
9.00 **Humans.** In the aftermath of the silo tragedy, Hester seeks revenge on Leo, while Karen decides she and Sam have no future, and decides to take matters into her own hands. Niska plans to return to Berlin with Astrid, but struggles with the idea of abandoning her family, and Joe makes a shocking confession to Laura. Last in the series.
10.00 **Gogglebox.** Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)
11.05 **Film: About a Boy.** (2002) A womaniser who poses as a father to meet single women changes his ways after befriending a lonely youngster. Romantic comedy, with Hugh Grant, Toni Collette and Nicholas Hoult.
12.55 **Film: Before I Go to Sleep.** (2014) A woman who cannot retain her memories tries to piece together her past, and fears her husband is hiding something from her. Thriller, starring Nicole Kidman and Colin Firth. **2.25** 60 Days in Jail. Jeff pursues a friendship with a duplicitous inmate and ends up in a dangerous situation. Zed receives a visit from his wife and Tam's feud with Barbara continues. (R) **3.20** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It. (R) **4.15** Location, Location, Kirstie Allsopp and (R) **5.10** Supersoppers. Claims of huge reductions by high-street discount stores. (R) **5.40** The King of Queens. Doug plans a Valentine's Day meal. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Monkey. **6.05** Bop Box. (R) **6.10** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.25** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.40** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.50** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.00** Seaside Antics. (R) **7.05** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.15** Plo Ahoy! (R) **7.30** Little Princess. (R) **7.40** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.00** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.25** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.00** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.35** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.45** Jelly Jam. (R) **10.00** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.00** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.30** The Gadget Show. (R) **12.30** Film: A Perfect Christmas List. (2014) Drama, starring Ellen Holman. **2.15** Film: Lost Letter Mysteries for Christmas. (2014) Festive comedy, starring Eric Mabius. **4.00** Film: The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey. (2007) Family drama, starring Tom Berenger. **5.45** Film: Scrooge. (1970) Musical fantasy, starring Albert Finney.
8.00 **Michael Buble at Christmas.** The Canadian crooner's fifth festive special sees him take to the stage of the Orpheus Theatre in Los Angeles, with guest appearances by Celine Dion, Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings, and Tori Kelly. The music features classics such as White Christmas, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, Jingle Bells, This Christmas and Here Comes Santa Claus. Michael also performs the premiere of his new Christmas song, The More You Give (The More You'll Have). (R)
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.00 **Film: Hercules.** (2014) Premiere. The ancient Greek warrior becomes famous as a highly exaggerated tales of his exploits spread throughout the land. He is forced to live up to his mythological status when he joins forces with a group of mercenaries to restore a deposed king to his rightful throne. Action adventure, starring Dwayne Johnson, Ian McShane and John Hurt. Includes 5 News at 10pm.
10.55 **Film: Snitch.** (2013) A man volunteers to become an undercover informant in a drug trafficking operation to save his son from prison. Crime thriller, starring Dwayne Johnson.
1.00 SuperCasino. **3.10** The Yorkshire Vet: Winter on the Moors. (R) **4.00** Now That's Funny! (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Danielle de Niese: The Birth of an Opera. **8.00** The Barber of Seville from Glyndebourne. **10.45** Lucy Worsley: Mozart's London Odyssey. **11.45** Horizon: Solar Storms – The Threat to Planet Earth. **12.45** How to Build a Jumbo Jet Engine. **1.45** Inside Porton Down: Britain's Secret Weapons Research Facility. **2.45** How to Build Britain's Secret Engineers. **3.45** Close
ITV2
12.20 You've Been Framed at Christmas! **1.20** The Smurfs: A Christmas Carol. **1.45** Film: Santa Paws 2: The Santa Pups (2012) **3.40** Film: Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas (2004) **5.05** Catchphrase Christmas Special. **6.05** The X Factor Winner's Story 7. **10.00** Family Guy. **11.55** American Dad! **12.55** The Amazing Spider-Man (2012) **1.00** Family Guy. **1.55** American Dad! **2.20** Teleshopping. **5.50** ITV3 Nightscreen
ITV3
11.45 Agatha Christie's Marple. **1.45** Film: Colombo: The Conspirators (1978) **3.45** Film: Casablanca (1942) **4.45** FYI Daily. **4.50** Film: Casablanca (1942) **5.55** Agatha Christie's Marple. **6.00** Meet the Penguins. **9.00** Alexander Armstrong's Land of the Midnight Sun. **10.00** Wycliffe. **11.10** Film: Wimbledon (2004) **12.10** FYI Daily. **12.15** Film: Wimbledon (2004) **1.05** Lewis. **2.55** Wycliffe. **3.45** May the Best House Win. **5.30** You're Only Young Twice. **5.55** ITV3 Nightscreen
ITV4
1.25 Film: Rio Bravo (1959) **4.15** Film: The Horse Soldiers (1959) **6.40** Film: Diamonds Are Forever (1971) **9.00** Film: The Deer Hunter (1978) **10.05** FYI Daily. **10.10** Film: The Deer Hunter (1978) **12.45** Hell on Wheels. **1.40** Quincy ME. **2.45** Ironside. **3.40** Tommy Cooper. **4.10** The Wine Show
E4
12.00 Film: Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (2011) **2.00** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas. **2.25** The Goldbergs. **5.05** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** Film: The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2 (2012) **11.20** Tattoo Fixers. **12.25** Gogglebox. **1.30** The Inbetweeners. **2.55** New Girl. **3.45** Hollyoaks
Film4
11.00 Mr Popper's Penguins (2011) **1.00** The Tale of the Princess Kaguya (2013) **3.50** Miracle on 34th Street (1994) **6.05** The Karate Kid (2010) **11.00** Knight and Day (2010) **11.10** August: Osage County (2013) **1.30** Before the Devil Knows You're Dead (2007) **3.50** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

A Christmas Reunion, Channel 5, 5.15pm

High-flying executive Amy inherits half of her aunt's bakery, but the catch is the remaining share has been left to her former high-school sweetheart. The pair are reunited in their home town just in time to organise the annual Christmas cookie contest. Romantic drama, starring Denise Richards and Jake Busey. (2015)

TUESDAY

Forgetting Sarah Marshall, ITV, 10.40pm

A musician is devastated when his actress girlfriend leaves him, and he tries to cure his broken heart with a holiday in Hawaii. Unfortunately, his efforts to forget the past are scuppered when his ex turns out to be staying at the same resort with her new boyfriend – a successful rock star – in tow. Romantic comedy, starring Jason Segel and Kristen Bell. (2008)



Saving Mr Banks, Friday, BBC2, 8.30pm

WEDNESDAY

Wanted, ITV, 10.40pm

A disillusioned man learns his father was a member of a secret society of superpowered assassins dedicated to eliminating people who are destined to commit acts of evil in the future. Having inherited his father's special abilities, he is recruited into the organisation and must take on a former member who has betrayed it. Action adventure, starring James McAvoy, Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman. (2008)

THURSDAY

Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa, BBC2, 11.05pm

The hapless local radio DJ ends up in the centre of a crisis when a colleague gets fired by the station's new owners, only to respond by returning to the studio with a shotgun and taking hostages. The police enlist Alan's aid as a negotiator, giving him the chance to revive his own flagging public profile. Comedy, starring Steve Coogan and Sean Pertwee. (2013)

FRIDAY

Saving Mr Banks, BBC2, 8.30pm

Premiere. Walt Disney tries to persuade the creator of Mary Poppins to part with the movie rights to her beloved creation. Fact-based drama, with Emma Thompson, Tom Hanks, Paul Giamatti and Colin Farrell. (2013)

Series proves it is far from an amateur affair

They say that roles for people of a certain age are rare, and that if you're an actress over the age of 40, you may as well forget it.

Well, try telling that to Sally Wainwright, the woman behind two of the BBC's biggest drama hits of the last five years – Happy Valley and Last Tango in Halifax.

The former won't be back on our screens for a couple of years, apparently, because Wainwright is so busy working on other projects, but it's provided Sarah Lancashire, who is 52, with arguably the best role of her career, that of gritty policewoman Catherine Cawood.

She also appears in Last Tango and has been Bafta-nominated for both parts (winning for Happy Valley in 2014).

"When you read Sally's scripts, they're not like scripts, they're like transcripts of people's lives and they breathe immediately," says Lancashire of Wainwright's work. "Her words do it for you, you don't have to think about it too much; in

fact it's often best to let her writing do it for you. She's just top of her game really."

But Lancashire isn't the only actor to benefit from Wainwright's Last Tango – its leads are portrayed by Anne Reid (81) and Derek Jacobi (78), while Nicola Walker (46) also appears.

If you haven't caught the series by now, what have you been doing? You've certainly been missing a treat – the tale of seventysomething former teenage sweethearts Alan and Celia finding love again after 60 years apart is touching, moving and, at times, hilarious. It's also inspired by Wainwright's own mother who reconnected with an old flame she hadn't seen since she was 15.

It's almost two years since we last caught up with them, and this new, two-part episode picks up where the previous series left off, with Celia's daughter Caroline (Lancashire) still coming to terms with the death of her wife Kate.

Perhaps it's her struggle to cope that inspires Caroline to consider a

fresh start away from the Harrogate home she shares with Alan and Celia. Regular viewers will be aware that Caroline bought her ex-husband out of the property with financial help from her mother and stepfather – so where will her decision to move on leave them?

For now, that remains a mystery, and the couple don't seem unduly concerned about their fate either – perhaps because they are too wrapped up in the local amateur dramatics group to notice; Celia's debut in a leading role in Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit seems to be taking all their time, attention and energy.

Meanwhile, somebody should keep an eye on Alan's daughter Gillian. She's a bit of a loose cannon at the best of times, but she seems to be sailing close to the edge as mysterious goings-on in her farm's barn lead her to believe that the past is coming back to haunt her.

The concluding part airs on Tuesday, but there is some good news – a fourth is on its way.



Derek Jacobi stars in Last Tango in Halifax, Monday, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Sir Lenny Henry – A Life on Screen BBC2, 9pm

When Lenny Henry won the New Faces talent show in 1975, those watching probably never expected him to go on to be an acclaimed Shakespearean actor and knight of the realm. In fact, we boldly suggest that Henry himself probably thought that such a twist in his life and career seemed highly unlikely. But during his 41 years in the public eye, Sir Lenworth George Henry, to give him his full name, has used his talents in a wide variety of genres, from comedy to drama, to writing and stand-up, not to mention TV presenting, music and, of course, Shakespeare. As a result, Henry fully deserves this tribute to his career, which features clips from various projects, as well as interviews with friends and colleagues, and with the man himself.

TUESDAY

Hilda Ogden's Last Ta-ra – A Tribute to Jean Alexander ITV, 8pm

They may have moved out of Coronation Street in 1987 after a 23-year stint, but Hilda Ogden remains one of British soap's most iconic characters. So it's only fitting that ITV is paying tribute to the actress who played her, Jean Alexander, who died in

October. The documentary features contributions from former colleagues William Roache, Michael Le Vell and Sally Dynevor, who also enjoy watching classic moments in a special recreation of Stan and Hilda Ogden's famous living room. Younger members of the Corrie cast also celebrate Hilda's legacy and famous fans, including Paul O'Grady, provide their own memories.

WEDNESDAY This Time Next Year ITV, 8pm

Davina McCall meets Rebecca and Richard Francis from Camarthen in Wales who are hoping to finally be able to extend their family and have a child. After suffering a number of miscarriages and unsure if this is linked to Rebecca's diabetes, the couple are hoping a new treatment method will allow them to finally have the baby they long for. The presenter also meets Luke Reeson who was hoping to make the GB Paralympic swim team and head to Rio. The 27-year-old from Cumbria took up swimming after suffering a gunshot wound to his leg and groin whilst serving in Afghanistan and found a new

career path. Will Luke be able to achieve his dream and earn a place on Team GB?

THURSDAY Who Do You Think You Are? BBC1, 8pm

The Royle Family star Ricky Tomlinson sets out to trace his family tree. The actor is well known for playing the archetypal scouser – and it turns out his Liverpool roots run deep. Ricky discovers that he comes from generations of carters, who transported goods on Liverpool's docks when the city was the British Empire's busiest port. Ricky's rage and sorrow grow as he discovers how dangerous conditions were for his ancestors, early echoing his own fight for workers' rights as a trade unionist in the 1970s.



Hilda Ogden's Last Ta-ra – A Tribute to Jean Alexander, Tuesday, ITV, 8pm

FRIDAY

Strictly Len Goodman BBC1, 7pm

It's the end of a Strictly era – head judge Len Goodman is hanging up his 'seven' paddle and stepping down from the panel. We'll still get to see him offer his opinions on the Christmas special, but this programme serves as his goodbye as he looks back over his time on Strictly – and seeing as he's been there since the first episode, it also functions as a history of one of Britain's most popular shows. Few people could have guessed when the pro-celebrity ballroom challenge began in 2004 as part of Sport Relief that it would become such a ratings juggernaut, turning the judges and many of the professional dancers into celebrities in their own right. Here, some of the cast members past and present share their memories of the Strictly experience – and Len.

Wild Tales from the Village BBC2, 7.30pm

Documentary following the animals that live near a remote rural French village, including red squirrels, dormice and stone martens. As the wildlife struggles to survive the winter, they take full advantage of living so close to unsuspecting humans in their search for food, while trying not to be detected.

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The Lowry houses a gallery dedicated to the artist's work and two theatres



Salford Quays in all its night-time splendour



The Imperial War Museum North is a must-see attraction for Quays visitors



The Lowry Outlet mall is popular with shoppers

Nothing to match this Lowry spot as the Quay to brush up on history

By Mark Shipp

SO I saw this fellow in Manchester with a picture frame and asked him where he'd got it. "It fell off the back of a Lowry," he said.

Welcome to Salford, where the artist is key – or should that be quay? – to a great deal of what this corner of the north west has to offer.

Home to MediaCityUK, where 27,000 BBC staff are employed, and where ITV favourites such as Coronation Street are filmed, Salford Quays is a big draw.

An idyllic waterside destination, it boasts entertainment, arts culture, a myriad of places to eat and shop and attracts around seven million visitors a year, bringing in £400m to the local economy.

Located alongside the Manchester Ship Canal, the quays has a gallery dedicated to

the work of the painter LS Lowry, who has many pieces depicting the city's industrial landscape. It's a fascinating insight into his life and works, with video footage to boot. Visitors will see that there was more to the artist than his matchstick men figures, with seascapes a particular feature.

The Lowry also houses two theatres and a drama studio. With its 1,730 seats, the Lyric also has the largest stage of any UK theatre outside London. My partner and I were treated to a show at the smaller venue, The Quays, with the terrific Opus 7 combining circus acts with accomplished musicianship.

For our short break, we stayed at the four-star Copthorne Hotel, enjoying its comfortable rooms and views overlooking the quayside. It is ideally located, being less than a mile away from the top tourist at-

tractions, which also include the Imperial War Museum North and the Lowry shopping outlet, housing the likes of M&S, Body Shop and Gap.

Just a short walk across the canal took us to all these major sights. But if football is your thing, you cannot escape the shadow of Old Trafford – home to the Salford lot, as I like to call them.

Rooftop

There, fans can enjoy the Manchester United Museum and tour, while Hotel Football, the world's first soccer-themed hotel is located opposite the stadium and offers matchday hospitality and a rooftop football pitch.

The award-winning Imperial War Museum North is an absolute must, particularly in such a poignant year of the Battle of the Somme's centenary. From a timeline

of conflicts, to talks and displays, it provides an important lesson for children, to learn of the sacrifices made and about genuine times of hardship and fighting spirit.

The exhibition, Fashion on the Ration: 1940s street style gave a glimpse at military uniforms and how civilians dressed throughout the decade.

Further sightseeing is on offer with cruises along the canal. And if venturing into Manchester itself, call in at Ziferblat.

A Russian concept, Ziferblat is a pay-as-you-go cafe where everything is free, except for the time spent in there. For 6p a minute, one can help themselves to as much tea, cake and biscuits as they want, chill out with their laptops or even play board games. But do your own washing up.

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"Service you expect from the Agent that delivers"

Skoda to the four . . . award-winners

By James Parker

ŠKODA's remarkable awards collection has been added to once again with no fewer than four new titles. The Citigo, Fabia, Yeti and Superb have all been named as the best in class by CarBuyer – one of the UK's most respected online motoring websites.

Unlike many industry awards, CarBuyer avoids the jargon that comes with traditional sectors and categories, concentrating instead on the kind of criteria that real-world motorists use when buying a car.

The Citigo was named Best First Car for the second year running, confirming its status as one of the most affordable and easy to drive small cars in the business.

Value

Commenting on the award, CarBuyer editor Stuart Milne said: "With prices starting at less than £8,300 and a range of stunning finance deals, it's great value to buy, and with 68.9mpg fuel economy possible and insurance groups as low as 1E, its running costs are among the lowest in the business."

Not to be outdone by its smaller sibling, the Fabia saw off strong competition to be named Best Small Car. The CarBuyer judges praised the supermini's refinement and high equipment levels, and commended its wide range of engine options.

"Practicality, value for money and reliability are essential ingredients for today's small-car buyer, and with those factors in mind, you simply can't do better than the Skoda Fabia. Interior space is remarkable, with a 330-litre



Best First Car for the second year running, Citigo



Skoda Fabia was named Best Small Car

boot and plenty of head and legroom for four or five passengers" commented Stuart Milne.

In what was Škoda's most successful CarBuyer Awards to date, the Yeti was also honoured – driving off with the 'Best Car for Under £150 a Month' title.

Explaining the decision, said: "The Škoda Yeti is one of our favourite small SUVs thanks

to its superb build quality, efficient engines and engaging driving experience.

Remarkable

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Taking Best Car for Under £150 a Month was the Yeti

Completing remarkable haul of titles, the Škoda's Superb Estate was named Best Estate Car. The judges praised the Superb's exceptional 660 litre boot and welcomed the attention to detail that marks the estate model out from its sector competitors.

Stuart Milne added: "The best estate cars offer more than just plenty of space for your

luggage. They provide well thought-out solutions to all kinds of everyday problems. No car does this better than the Superb Estate.

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Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA Fabia range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 46.3 (6.1) to 65.7 (4.3); Extra Urban 67.3 (4.2) to 80.7 (3.5); Combined 58.9 (4.8) to 74.3 (3.8). CO₂ emissions for the ŠKODA Fabia range are 110 to 100 g/km. Standard EU test figures are for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. The advertised range is correct as of 10 October 2016 and is subject to change.

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funeral directors

Turn To Us For Help and Support

In your time of need we'll take care of all the funeral arrangements.

- Est. 1907
- 24 hour service

G. Gibbs

Funeral Directors

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West Bromwich B71 1PZ

0121 553 0442

Dignity

Part of Dignity plc. A British Company.

1

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education & tuition

1-2-1 Maths & Sciences Tuition

by qualified local teachers.

Primary to A-Level.

From £10.

01902 311950 / 07742 064 269

elderly & disabled

WREKIN STAIRLIFTS recondi-

tioned lifts from £799. New avail-

able. 01952 405397/07897 273617

2

Leisure Time

bikes

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www.jacksonhateleycycles.co.uk

GIGANTIC CYCLE CLEARANCE

Massive Christmas

giveaway. Book your Cycle

for Christmas at sale price.

All cycles built and guaranteed

with a 24 hour repair service

All spares and accessories

at discount price

HATELEY'S

Simply the best

Ring Dave on

01902 782344

458 Stafford Road, Oxley,

Wolverhampton

caravans / motorhomes

We Want Your Motorhome

Finance Cleared

Fast Secure Payment

Top Prices Paid

Please Call

AEG on 01384 848439 or

Lee Jinks on 07740 895448

www.aegmotorhomes.co.uk

CARAVANS & CHALETs

For sale with

seaviews. Clarch Bay near

Aberystwyth from £4995 includes

2016 site fees. Call Phil on: 01970

820579. sales@clarchbay.com

HAVE YOU CHECKED your adver-

tisement today? We would respect-

fully remind advertisers that it is

their responsibility to inform the

publishers of any mistakes or inac-

curacies on the first day of publica-

MOVE IN BY THE NEW YEAR!!

Own your own holiday home on

stunning seaside holiday park. 12

month season, fantastic facilities.

Call Paul on 07960 944721.

STATIC CARAVANS for sale on

beautiful seaside holiday park. 12

month season, 2017 site fees inc.

Finance available! T&Cs apply

Call Paul on 07960 944721.

WINTER CARAVAN for sale. Quick

sale needed. Sited on Brynnewen

Holiday Park. Weekend and

evening viewings available.

Call or text 07493 108554.

mind, body & soul

clairvoyance

CLAIRVOYANT JOHN STARKEY

Appointments. Home visits & Tele-

phone readings 01902 334 224

PSYCHIC TAROT READINGS Live

1 to 1. 0806 757 0900 75p per min.

Sunday 18th December 3pm-5pm.

Call 01427 7003 (£25 - 30 mins).

massage

FULL BODY MASSAGE 30 mins

£21. 40 mins £26. 1 hour £36.

Shower facilities. 01902 782960.

what's on

antique fairs

ANTIQUE & COLLECTORS FAIR

Every month. Codsall Village Hall,

Sunday 18th December 3pm-5pm.

Call Brian: 07923 53178.

3

Home & Services

antiques

Louis Taylor

Fine Art Auctioneers & Valuers

House Clearances & Collections arranged

at short notice for our monthly auctions

01782 638100

in your garden

AT C B SHEDS & FENCING We

supply/fitt. Free quotes. Supply sheds

and decking 01922 720270.

AT SHEDRITE order sheds/play-

houses for Christmas delivery. Wil-

lenshall Rd WY1 2HA 01902 450137

SLABS 450mm x 450mm RIVEN

LACED, only £1.76 inc VAT.

Ranton Building Supplies:

01543 276006.

items for sale

ASH RECLAMATION new and

used building materials. Supply

doors and windows 01543 453222.

items wanted

ALL GOLD 9CT £300 PER OUNCE

CASH PAID TODAY

No amount is too small

A GENUINE LADY BUYER

All Jewellery • Quilts • Vintage • Crochet

• Lladro • Old coins

• WATCHES • COSTUME JEWELLERY

• Diamonds and Gold Coins • Clocks • Paintings

• ALL SILVER • All Oriental items

Pre-47 silver coins All war medals etc

ANYTHING OLD & INTERESTING

01922 495066 or 07971 783206

READERS ARE ADVISED to care-

fully consider all of their options

before agreeing to the sale of any of

their items.

WANTED FOR CASH three piece

up. 101 x 110 x 110. £1000 paid

Call 01785 815925/07947 627142.

BUY LOCAL SELL LOCAL

01902 317878

ClassifiedAds

pc's, laptops & accessories

CLIENT COMPUTERS



Certified technician &

Microsoft partner.

Repair & maintain laptops and

PCs. In West Midlands.

Virus removal, broken

screens, wifi.

Windows problems etc.

Home visits or bring to me.

Long established.

Laptops available.

0121 556 9481

t.v. / home entertainment

service

AERIAL AND TV SPECIALIST

Any TV Repairs, Plasma, LED etc.

CCTV cameras supplied & fitted.

Any area. Free Estimates. 7 days.

Digital aerials, Sky installation. Wall

mounts / TV setups. 07850 330251.

specialists at your service

aerials

ClassifiedAds

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01902 311950 / 07742 064 269

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

I am very pleased with the response

I get from my Classified

Advertising Contract

Steve -

AA Digital Aerials

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL

01902 319 191

Brought to you by Express & Star

AA DIGITAL AERIALS

AERIALS FITTED FROM £75

WE'LL BEAT ANY QUOTE

Work Guaranteed

01902 858191

01384 429166

01543 439095

01922 716029

07833 738857

VISA

01902 317878

01902 317878

01902 317878

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christmas trees/wreaths

CHRISTMAS TREES

Nordmann Fir from £20

with FREE mistletoe

Holly Wreaths from £5.

opp HOLLY BUSH GARDEN

CENTRE EXIT, J11 M6.

Open 7 days a week

christmastreesatpl.co.uk

Check above website or call

0121 505 3558 for quality real trees,

blocked and netted.

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RAPID SECURITY CCTV & alarms

cameras, supplied and fitted,

domestic and commercial, same

day service, free call out. Call Robb

on 07960 173589/ 0800 633 5899.

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B & S JOINERY Six internal pre-

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07958 552625.

CARPENTRY AND JOINERY

Kitchens, fitted wardrobes, doors,

flooring, staircases and refurb.

07903 234137 or 0121 4939733.

carpet & upholstery cleaning

A CLASS CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING

OAP discount. Recession Prices.

Unbeatable Value: Rooms cleaned from £10

Call Paul 07870 341089

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A CARPETS & VINYLs supplied or

just fitted, quality samples brought

to your home. No job too small. Free

quotes call Mark 01543

820598/07941 619694.

carpet services

CARPETS AND VINYLs Fitted and

supplied. 30 yrs exp. Free measur-

ing/ sample service 07376 195140.

cleaning

Sparkle Clean

Cleaning Services

Office or Household cleaning

Pre or After Event Cleaning

Enquiries & quotes call

07818 238893

bathrooms

JRI Bathrooms & Wetrooms

Over 20 years

experience in bathroom

& kitchen installations.

TILING/PLASTERING/

FREE QUOTES

07392 379741 or 01543 529648

Brought to you by Express & Star

building services

DAVIES & SON BUILDERS

Over 35 years experience in the industry

All aspects of building work including:

Extensions, loft conversions, roofing,

driveways & landscaping.

Discounts offered.

01902 579592 / 07837 994465

P.FENLON BUILDERS All aspects of

building. Block paving, plastering,

brickwork etc. 01902 445315 /

07790 286187.

building supplies

RECLAIMED BRICKS, Tiles,

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switch to a rewiring. Insured, free

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registered. Fully insured. For a free

quote call 07563 320318.

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wiring specialist. NICEIC. High

quality local service. Freephone:

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For items upto £250.

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expressandstar.co.uk

fencing

ClassifiedAds

BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

PORTWAY FENCING

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

"I am extremely

happy with the

service I get from

my Express & Star

Classified Sales

Representative

and I would

recommend them

C.A.A.R.S. ANIMAL SANCTUARY
Registered Charity
PET RESCUE & BOARDING KENNELS
FOR DOGS AND CATS
Open Mon to Sun
Call 01922 476208
Red Lane off Crab Lane
Essington WV11 2DZ

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

vets

Express & Star

**THIS SPACE
COULD BE
PROMOTING
YOUR
BUSINESS**

Every day our customers get a great response from Classified Advertising.

So could you by calling our friendly experienced Sales Advisors on 01902 319191.

**5
Business & Farming**

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering any obligations.

business directory

commercial premises

**STORAGE UNITS
TO LET**
800sqft and 1600sqft.
Burntwood area.
Ring Michael Bailey,
07538 867585.

**6
Property**

overseas property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

properties wanted

Need to sell your home fast?
We can help you make a fresh start
With solutions to suit... you can clear your debts and make a fresh start

Purchase Agreed Within 7 DAYS

ALL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED
COMPLETE ON DATE TO SUIT
FREE VALUATION AND LEGALS
FREE FRIENDLY ADVICE
LOCAL COMPANY

MARION | PROPERTY SOLUTIONS
WHY NOT CALL US TODAY
for an informal, friendly and confidential chat?
01922 311 030 OUR LINES ARE OPEN 24/7

*Terms and Conditions apply

Home Cash Buyer
Sell today, sign today, complete when u wish
£££ RENT BACK OPTIONS £££
Houses / Land Required
Ring Paul 24/7 Local **07870 341 089**
Sandwell area: Call 0121 696 4154
Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049
Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901
www.homecashbuyer.co.uk

ClassifiedAds BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

We have been advertising in the Express & Star and Chronicles for over 20 years and consider it a key part of our business with the regular flow of calls, which our advertising generates.

Black Country Homes

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL **01902 319 191** Brought to you by **Express & Star**

Express & Star

FIXED PRICE RECRUITMENT PACKAGE

FILL YOUR NEXT VACANCY WITH OUR BRONZE FIXED PRICE RECRUITMENT PACKAGE

Bronze package includes:

- 5cm x 2 column advert in Express & Star (Thursday)
- 5cm x 2 column advert in Chronicle of your choice
- Two week listing on jobs.expressandstar.com
- 5 line advert to appear in Express & Star Classified jobs for 5 nights
- We will run the lineage and online advert on a daily basis until you fill the vacancy

Package Price £399*

JANUARY SPECIAL OFFER
Book a January recruitment package and get a second package at half price within 6 months

ClassifiedAds BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

CLASSIFIEDS HELPED ME...

"I am really pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising!"
Paul Westwood - Home Cash Buyer

FOR GREAT BUSINESS RESULTS CALL **01902 319 191** Brought to you by **Express & Star**

J9 Accommodation

**NO DEPOSIT
★MOVE IN TODAY★**
Studios from £90pw*
Rooms from £65pw*
*Includes Most Bills
CHECK WEBSITE FOR LIVE LIST
Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme

01902 213121
J9accommodation.com

7 Jobs
full time - general

**MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
JOBSDAY**

jobs.expressandstar.com
REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU

**8
Motoring**

cars over £1500

BARGAIN

BLACK CORSA
1.2, 3 dr, 5 seats, recent MoT due end 2017, lady owner, 80,000 miles, Aux/CD player.
Sold as seen.
£1,800 ono
07890 387533.



CHEVROLET SPARK PLUS
62 Reg., MoT August 2017, 5Dr, fsh, light blue, 13,700 miles, still under warranty, lady owner, cheap tax, low insurance group.
£3,300 o.n.o.
07984 207513.

MUST BE SEEN

SUZUKI JIMNY
53 reg, MoT October 26, 2017, blue/silver, alloys, new front tyres/battery, 48,000 miles, excellent runner and mechanics.
£2,500 ono.
01785 715886.

BARGAIN

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 1.8 VVT
2009, 94,000 miles, 6 months MoT, good all round condition.
£2,750 o.n.o.
07909 229016.

cars under £1500

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

BARGAIN

CITROEN PICASSO
05 Reg., MoT to July 2017, reverse parking sensors, 71,000 miles, good condition.
£850 o.n.o.
07803 314129.

BARGAIN

PEUGEOT 206 QUICKSILVER
02 reg, Silver/grey, 97,000 miles, new front suspension, new battery, new clutch and cable, 11 months MoT, good little runner.
£500 ono.
0121 5597864 or 07578 776587.

BARGAIN

ROVER 75 CONNOISSEUR TOURER
02 Reg., silver with blue leather interior, all electric, MoT March 2017.
Very good condition.
£550 ono.
07459 073762.

IDEAL FIRST CAR

VAUXHALL CORSA ENVOY 12V
1000cc, X Reg., petrol, MoT November 2017, 58,000 miles, completely genuine car, green metallic paintwork.
£400.
07974 961659.



VAUXHALL CORSA SXI
2005, 93,500 miles, black, electric windows, electric mirrors, MoT, central locking, alloys, CD.
£750 ono.
07909 847769.

driving tuition

Homer's
10 Hours £125! Four Hours £40!
2 Hours £20! All Areas Covered
ADDITIONAL REQUIRED. Gift vouchers available for £10
01384 244854 / 0121 5640090
01902 580065 www.homersdrivingschool.co.uk

DALLAS
Van hire ..
Wide variety of vans.
■ Small ■ Large ■ Lutons ■ Tipper ■ Flats ■ Crew ■ Refrigerated ■ Minibus

Vans Starting from £35

13A, Woden Road West, Wednesbury, WS10 7SF
www.dallas-hire.co.uk Tel: 0121 647 7112

spares & accessories

mobile mechanics

MOBILE MECHANICS Service & repairs. Headgasket, clutches and cambelts. 07747 848469.

**10
Personals**

personal

CHAMELEONS SPA Relax in our premises, 2 jacuzzi's, steamroom/ sauna. Chill out rooms, bar area. Open 7 days a week from 2:00pm until late, 2 mins from J9/J10 M6. For further details call 0121 5686117. www.chameleons.co

FEMALE, 70 PLUS YEARS
Happy, youthful, GSOH, seeking male to accompany lady, to share dining out, occasional day activities, possible dancing, theatre, n/s necessary, believes in mutual respect, honesty and sincerity. Cannock and surrounding area.
Photo please (returned)
Box Number P20649, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

Walsall Council, Planning and Building Control

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) act 1990 Development Management Procedure Order 2015 (as amended)

The below applications have been made to the Walsall Council. Applications can be viewed at First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Walsall or online www.walsall.gov.uk/planning. Representations can be made online, email: planning@walsall.gov.uk or in writing to Head of Planning and Building Control, Civic Centre, Darvall Street, Walsall, WS1 1DG. Representations should be made within 21 days of the date of this notice. Please note: Your letter and personal details will form part of the planning file which is a public document and will be available for inspection at the Council Offices. The information may be released as part of a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

16/1793 Owl Homes Limited For: RESERVED MATTERS TO OUTLINE APPROVAL 15/0180/OJ For 8 DETACHED DWELLINGS - APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING FOR DETERMINATION. At: 47 PORTLAND ROAD, ALDRIDGE, WS9 8NU

motorbikes

NFL MOTORCYCLE TRAINING
CBT to full licence. Call 8am - 9pm for deals 01902 494422.

scrap vehicles

MCB
TOP PRICES PAID FOR ALL SCRAP CARS, VANS, BIKES, CLASSICS
Tel: **01902 408176**
1000's of parts available at all times
MONMOR RD, WV1 2TZ

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

THE JAP MAN Top prices paid for cars, vans & 4x4s. All considered 01902 502050 / 07754 550862

vehicles wanted

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 549849, buyer will call.

vehicle hire

W.T.R. VAN HIRE Connects, Transits, Lutons with Tail lifts, pick-ups. Open seven days. 01902 457002 / 01384 79090.

Angels
The largest adult apartments in the Midlands
• Adult Only • Easy Access
• 5 Bedrooms • 5 Bathrooms
Unit 5 Frederick Street, Walsall WS2 9NE
01922 635544

SLIM, FIT, EX PROFESSIONAL WIDOW IN 70's
WLTM Man with car, 50-70 for Friendship and Fun.
Box Number P20644, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Angels
The largest adult apartments in the Midlands
• Adult Only • Easy Access
• 5 Bedrooms • 5 Bathrooms
Unit 5 Frederick Street, Walsall WS2 9NE
01922 635544

**9
Local Information**

public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to **Marie Hogg on 01902 713146** or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk (remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

Local Specialists

Accountancy

GORDON & Co

Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors

Specialising in self-employed, landlord, limited company and Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) clients. Professional, friendly and competitively priced accountancy and taxation services offered to suit your business needs:

- Self-Employed Accounts and Self-Assessment Tax Returns
- VAT Advice and Compliance
- Limited Company Financial Statements
- CIS Accounts, Monthly Returns and Self-Assessment Tax Returns
- Bookkeeping and Payroll
- Corporation Tax Advice and Compliance

Please call or e-mail to discuss your requirements and arrange a free consultation.

101 Mellish Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS4 2DE

Telephone: 01922 613419

E-mail: enquiries@gordon-and-co.com

Website: www.gordon-and-co.com



Local Specialists



Electricians

MB electric

All domestic and commercial electrical works undertaken
Home rewiring from £800

For a high quality local service call:
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07939 503905
mbelectric.co.uk

Gardening

Woodman Tree Services

Domestic & Commercial
Council Approve Contracts
Over 30 yrs Experience

Qualified, all work to BS 3998 standards
* Felling * Re-shaping * Pruning
* Reduction * Hedge Trimming
* Stump Removal * Landlord Contracts
24 hour Emergency Call Out
Logs and wood chip for sale



R.G. Wood ARB
Home: 01543 258108
Mobile: 07947 352960

Fencing

B.J. FENCING SUPPLIES

MEMBERS OF GUILD OF MASTERCRAFTSMEN

A FAMILY BUSINESS BUILT ON QUALITY AND INTEGRITY

PANEL	6'x6'	6'x5'	6'x4'	6'x3'	6'x2'
Featheredge	£25	£23	£21	£18.50	£15
Overlap 10 Bar	£17.50	£16	£14.50	£13	£11.50
Overlap 8 Bar	£16.50	£15	£13.50	£12	£10.50
Trellis	£16	£14	£12	£10	£9

FEATHEREDGE PANELS ALSO AVAILABLE IN TANALED TIMBER ADD 20%

★ OUR GUARANTEED PRICING COMMITMENT ★
★ IF YOU FIND ANY PANEL OF EQUIVALENT QUALITY AT A LOWER PRICE - WE WILL BEAT THAT PRICE BY 5% ★

★ FREE QUOTATIONS FOR SUPPLY AND ERECT ★
★ TRADE & QUANTITY ENQUIRIES WELCOME - DISCOUNT RATES ★
★ WE NOW STOCK TRADE FENCE AND SHED TREATMENT AND CREOCOTE FOR EXTENDED LIFE TO TIMBER PRODUCTS - VARIOUS COLOURS.
TEL: 07886 369958, 07828 693442 OR 01543 674688
UNIT 7E ZONE 4, BURNTWOOD BUSINESS PARK WS7 3XD
(WE ARE LOCATED DIRECTLY OPPOSITE MORRISONS CAR PARK)

Roofing

WALSALL ROOFING SPECIALISTS

AS RECOMMENDED ON

thebestofwalsall

- Slate and Tile Repairs
- Flat Roofs, EPDM
- Rubber Roofing
- uPVC Soffits and Fascias
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- All Pointing Work
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- 20 Year Guarantee
- Dry Ridge Systems
- 25 Years Experience
- Re-Roofs
- All genuine quotes beaten
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FREE ESTIMATES

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www.walsallroofingspecialists.co.uk

ACCOUNTANCY AND TAXATION

Self Assessment and all accountancy services for the self employed, rental incomes, partnerships and limited companies.

A prompt and reliable service at a sensible cost

For a free appointment please call:
Robert Ollerenshaw on: Shenstone

01543 481329

Email: ollerenshaw@btinternet.com www.ollerenshaw.co.uk

Evening appointments not a problem

R.G. Electrical Ltd

Est1995

ALDRIDGE

DOMESTIC - COMMERCIAL - INDUSTRIAL

Homes - Shops - Offices

- Rewires and Upgrades • Emergency Breakdown
- PAT Testing • Central Heating Wiring • Storage Heaters
- Fire Alarms • Intruder Alarms • CCTV
- Building Society Surveys NICEIC Inspections

All areas covered 0800 298 2904

robertelectrical@blueyonder.co.uk

37 Woodside Way, Walsall WS9 0HY



Aerials

MATT WALTERS DIGITAL AERIALS

Aerials - Satellite Dishes Fitted From £65

ANY LIKE FOR LIKE
QUOTATION BEATEN

Senior Citizen Discounts
2 Year Guarantee

Digital Aerials/Freeview/Freesat
SKY HD/ SKY+/MULTIROOM

- Free Quotation • Repairs • Free Call Out
- Same Day service • Freeview Specialist

£10 OFF ON PRODUCTION OF THIS ADVERT

Aldridge Based

Mobile: 07853 253176

Double Glazing

WINDOW DOCTOR

GLAZING REPAIRS & LOCKSMITHS.
SERVICE & REPAIR FOR ALL DOORS & WINDOWS.
MISTY & BROKEN GLASS REPLACED.

WE REPAIR HANDLES, HINGES, SEALS, PATIO'S, WINDOW & DOOR LOCKS.
CONSERVATORY & GUTTERING LEAKS REPAIRED.

10 YR GUARANTEE

01543 504900 24 HRS Est 30
07748 108035 years
12 WELLINGTON DRIVE, CANNOCK WS11 1PU

Driveways

WESTCOT CONTRACTORS LTD

38 Years Experience
TARMACADAM CONCRETE BLOCK PAVING
LEADING DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL CONTRACTORS COVERING
LICHFIELD AND STAFFORDSHIRE

- Domestic Drives • Patios • Tennis Courts construction
- Commercial car parks and roads • Vehicle access crossing highway approved

Free quotations - All work guaranteed

Call for enquiries 07985 233112

Office 01543 251416

email: westcot.contractors.ltd@gmail.com

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JL Garden & Tree Services

Garden Maintenance & Tree Felling

Tree Felling
Garden Maintenance
All Debris Removed

Call Jason for a No Obligation Quote
Fully Insured

Tel: 01922 615936

Mob: 07809 431703

Loft Ladders

LOFT SERVICES

UPVC or Wooden Drop Down
Loft Hatch with Easiway
Aluminium Ladder

£185 fitted

- New or enlarged Loft access
- LOFT FLOORING
- LOFT INSULATION

Call Carl on
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15 years' experience

Plumbing & Heating

Pauls Home Services LTD

Condensing Boilers
Radiators • Upgrades
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Breakdowns

- Bathrooms • Cloakrooms
- Kitchens • Plumbing
- Tiling • Showers
- Electric • Plastering
- Decorating • Lighting

FREE QUOTATIONS
ALL WORK GUARANTEED

07790 873567

01922 417062

NO CALL OUT CHARGE

Plastering

C.A. Plastering

For competitive quotes on all your refurbishment
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AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416117

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3000 Box 419673

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady young looking 60s, genuine and kind seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424671

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3008 Box: 409715

CAROL, mid 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told) Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH, ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424783

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3016 Box: 413399

SUE, 60s lady, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady. I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424781

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3020 Box 421375

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTm interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424675

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! Tel: 0906 515 3024 Box 42303

CHRISTINE, 40, attractive slim sporty brunette seeks fit well built male. Call me let's see what the future brings. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425061

NAUGHTY curvy 46yr old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a naughty side and lots of banter. WLTm chap 30+. If you are married even better. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3012 Box 424543

LOUISE, 29, curvy red haired female, been hurt in the past seeks male to buy her flowers and mend her broken heart. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425041

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. Tel: 0906 515 3028 Box 408291

LYN, 47, curvy quiet sensitive brunette but with a wild side. It could be exciting to know me! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425013

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3004 Box 42365

RETIRED happy, caring, attractive female, likes gardening, travel, animals, comedy, seeks tall, funny, kind chap. Shropshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 411459

DEBBIE, 50, petite blonde looking for some fun and adventure with similar fun loving male. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424799

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KAREN, 47, an attractive blue-eyed redhead, curvy size 16, likes films, football, pubs, reading, seeking likeminded male for nights in/out, hopefully more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424779

MELINDA, 52yrs, attractive and broad minded seeking chap any age for some fun. Couples also. Text only Mailbox: 4131946 No: 425037

JULIE attractive 35yr old female with a great body, looking for no strings attached evening meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425037

JOSIE, sexy black lady, 52yrs seeks adult with concerning gent, any age, discreet clean, womanly figure. Text only Mailbox: 4028592

MARY, passionate honest slim blue-eyed blonde, 39yrs, likes nights in/out, looking for affectionate male, any age to spend adult fun times. Interested? call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425009

ANNABELLE, sophisticated 28yrs hoping to meet older gent for adult fun, discreet, sincere, genuine advertiser. Text only Mailbox: 4157106

CALL or text me, I'm Claire, single, 41yrs loves life to the full, hoping you will contact me if you want a genuine fun time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424779

SARAH, mature feminine lady, kind caring but still has a sensual side, hoping to meet like minded, confident, non smoking gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424779

PROFESSIONAL lady, mid 60s, interests include gardening, theatre, walking, days out and travelling, animal lover, looking for a professional gentleman, kind and caring, intellectual and outgoing, with gosh, for friendship possibly more, in the Stafford area. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424569

HI I'm Ellie, 39, pretty, funny, great figure, OHAC/child, have everything apart from a man, WLTm someone I wanna be with, not have to be. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424635

ATTRACTIVE professional lady, 57, widow, likes dining out, country pubs, good conversation and laughter, seeks genuine professional gent, with a gosh with similar interests to enjoy life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424157

HEATHER, 48, well travelled solvent brunette looking to share a large glass of wine and whatever follows with affectionate man friend. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424429

TERRI, attractive young looking 29yrs, long legged sporty seeking nice man to fall in love with, up to 45yrs. If that's you pls call, you have nothing to lose. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424377

SUSAN, 43, pretty green eyed brunette looking for an interesting attractive man who would understand my wicked sense of humour. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424381

JOY attractive Asian female 37, loves to dance, looking for older English gent to teach me some new steps, tall in love with, spoil, pamper and make me feel very special. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424255

WENDY, 44yrs, dark haired beauty with blue eyes and a fab figure. WLTm gent any age, give me a call and I promise to call you back, or text/email. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424339

RENATA, 55, slim, attractive lady with long auburn hair just wants to have a good time with likeminded older guy up to 75yrs. Looks/status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424263

LOUISE, 40, elegant genuine blonde who's been hurt in the past seeks tall handsome male to be her Mr Right. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424261

MELANIE, 49yrs, varied interests, attractive, sensual lady seeks gent any age or status, call, see what happens. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424337

CALLING all Gentlemen! I'm Janet a mature solvent stylish lady, I'm waiting for you to call me so we can wine/dine and have some good times ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424335

BABS, single mum looking for adult companionship, any age/looks or status. Interested? Come on over to my place. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424253

HI I'm Angie, attractive petite mid 50s lady. I'm a very very active lady, with lots of interests. WLTm chap with GSOH, looks/age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424333

HELLO Gents, I'm a mature attractive interesting lady, with gorgeous eyes. I'm smart, sophisticated, love theatre and films. Give me a call or text me. Looks unimportant, must be kind. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424331

SICK of being stuck on the shelf, Jenny, 45, attractive blonde seeks N/S caring male 42-55 who feels the same to share adult companionship, meals in/out, possibly LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424225

SENSUAL tactile, attractive female, long blonde hair, blue eyes, loves travel, winning/dining, WLTm male for mutual companionship. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424231

HI I'm Pam, 42, slim, blonde, green eyes, discreet, loves cuddles, seeking similar discreet tactile male for mutual friendship with benefits. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424101

LOUISE, 39, tactile good-looking solvent female WLTm spontaneous male for holidays, spoiling and lots of fun times. Age/looks/status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424055

NAOMI, 43, attractive fun loving female with lots of love to offer a genuine caring guy. Come on, lets share all the good things life has to offer together! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424085

CLARA, 32yr Irish lass working away from home and friends, lonely and looking for older male companionship with no lies or complications. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424021

CHRISTIAN male, 51, seeking Christian female, 35-45 for friendship, possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423747

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419263

MALE, 59, 5'12, dark hair, looking for a lady, 50-60, to share the good things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424759

AMY 31yr old single mum, new to the area, looking to meet male companion to help make me settle in and feel special again, age/status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424051

TALL, slim and curvy woman, 57, attractive with GSOH and varied interests, seeks similar man 50-65 Bristol area, for discreet assignments. Text only Mailbox: 5546538

DIANE, loving and caring, young 72 year old, blond hair, brown eyes, smoker, looking for genuine male with gosh, for friendship. Wall-area. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424025

ELLA, 46, slim confident brunette, tired of spending lonely nights alone, seeking honest, romantic male to enjoy nights out, hopefully leading to more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424015

JANE, attractive blonde lady, genuine, sincere, likes theatre, meals out, looking to meet nice looking professional single man. Text only Mailbox: 5535192

JULIE, attractive early 40's brunette, size 10, varied interests. WLTm male for fun times, good conversations, spoiling and maybe more. status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423903

LYN, 39yrs, dark hair and blue eyes, WLTm action man of any age for fun and games. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423899

Single Men

IAN, 5ft8, medium build, OHAC, late 50s, likes most things, holidays, gardening, motorbikes, WLTm similar aged lady, 50-60, with nice personality. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421345

MIKE 49, slim, young looks, seeks female, 35-50 for friendship and good time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 356651

DAVE, 54, 5ft10, medium build, easy going, happy, looking for an attractive, loving and caring female, 45-55, for friendship and relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423073

YOUNG 70 widower, fit, lonely, 5ft 11ins, 11st, likes drives, walks, DIY, meals out, gardening, smoker, looking for lady to spend life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424687

BIG is beautiful is larger is lovelier, Steve 58, likes retired broadminded, adventurous BBW for fun times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 412031

TOU, 32, slim, attractive, own home, likes to eat and in, WLTm honest, kind girl for tender, loving care and fun times. No time-wasters please. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424929

MALE, 64, single, n/s, likes music, films, driving, nights in, dining out, trips, WLTm lady, 50-70, looks unimportant, for friendship and relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424927

CARING male, 55, N/S, medium build, likes meals out, music, cinema, sports, driving, seeks female, 40-60 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 239148

HONEST male, 60s, N/S, GSOH, car owner, seeks female, 55-70 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416817

MALE, 63, caring, easygoing, N/S seeks female 50-70 for friendship and romance. Looks unimportant. Likes occasional drink, eating in/out, cinema and driving. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418893

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419263

MALE, 59, 5'12, dark hair, looking for a lady, 50-60, to share the good things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424759

ANY mature women over 60 seeking adult fun - this attractive male 58 will cater for your needs, any size or status. Text only. Mailbox: 5410860

WIDOWER, 60s, GSOH, n/s, likes places of interest, country walks, cats and dogs, music, theatre and cinema, still looking for a lady, around 55-65, for companionship, ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424709

ATTRACTIVE, tall, dark, professional male, 50, GSOH, easygoing, enjoys sport, socialising, good company, looking to meet attractive female for fun, adventure and take things from there. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424563

59YR old male, likes country walks, pub lunches, seeks lady for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424685

MALE 50 seeks mature, home loving lady, 60 plus who enjoys cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424683

MARTIN trustworthy, warm hearted, loving, reliable male, 45, 6ft, medium build, young at heart, GSOH, seeks female, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424681

MARK 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424679

CARING 55yr old male, widower, 6ft 3ins, WLTm lady, 40-55 for fun and laughter, maybe happy ever after. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424677

MALE 57, attractive, seeks mature woman any age for close fun, married or single. Text only Mailbox: 5410860

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BLACK male, ex-marine, 6ft1, would like to meet a lady, 30 or over, if you would like a night in or out, Birmingham area, give me a shout. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424507

ADVENTUROUS 36-year-old male, slim, dark hair, likes music, cycling and photography, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417295

GENT 48, youthful outlook, likes countryside, keep fit, karaoke, seeks soul mate for times. N Shropshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408411

IAN, GSOH, 60, looking for somebody to go out with and have a good time, a good laugh, maybe things will move on, I'm young at heart so looking for younger female if possible. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424371

ITALIAN male, 46, from Oldbury, seeking female, 30-50, for friendship, possible relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424371

RETIRED male seeking companionship maybe more. No time wasters. Text only Mailbox: 5542315

MALE, 59, 5'12, looking for genuine lady, 50-55, to share the good things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424353

NICE old-fashioned gent, seeks kind, caring romantic lady for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416905

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TIM, young at heart, intelligent, fun loving, spontaneous, GSOH, WLTm a lady with a GSOH, for friendship and possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424395

ATTRACTIVE, Tall and intelligent Black male 50, lover of animals and nature seeks solvent lady of quality 50+ for romance. Text only Mailbox: 5561456

47 year old guy, 5'7, dark hair, blue eyes, likes DVDs, nights in and out, seeks female, 42-49, in Leamington Spa/Rugby area, for friendship and long term relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424325

ANDY, single, 53, looking for a mature, sexy lady, age/looks unimportant, for fun and adventure. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422893

MALE, mid 60s, honest person, lots of interests, looking for a lady, 45-65, to share the good times with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424321

TALL, 63-year-old male, seeking n/s lady, 45+, for hassle free fun times, in the Wolverhampton and surrounding areas. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424291

JAY, attractive, 6'12, single father, loves a laugh and a giggle, looking for a lady for evenings out, company and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424303

STEVE, 53yr old male, laid back, likes most things in life, seeks female 40-50, for evenings out, need some TLC in my life. Text only Mailbox: 4362854

MALE, 44, very interesting person, own business, sporty, honest and genuine, likes nights out, meals out, cinema, country walks, WLTm a lady for friendship and good company leading to a permanent relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420841

WHITE curvy lady any age, required by handsome black professional male, for discreet casual adult fun. No time wasters pls. Text only Mailbox: 5066605

ROB, 63, 6ft, slim, own hair own teeth, young at heart, considered good looking, OHAC, solvent, so get back if you're interested. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424027

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

TONY from Walsall, mid 50s, stocky build, looking to meet a lady any age/looks/race to have fun times with, so please get in touch if you're interested. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424087

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

TONY from Walsall, mid 50s, stocky build, looking to meet a lady any age/looks/race to have fun times with, so please get in touch if you're interested. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424087

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424131

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HELLO I am an easy going chap and I WLTm a lady, 55-65 for a permanent relationship, so please get in touch. Tel



Cannock's Graham Machin, Clubman of the Year, receives his award from league president John Priest



Umpire of the Year Trevor Cotton collects his award from John Priest at the Banks's Stadium



Junior Performance winner Chris Becker with John Priest

Milford haul bowls over Staffs Clubs cricket rivals

MILFORD HALL walked off with an impressive haul of silverware at the Staffs Clubs' awards night.

The league brought the curtain down on another successful summer at Walsall Football Club's Banks's Stadium with former England, Leicestershire and Kent wicketkeeper Paul Nixon the guest of honour, entertaining the 100-plus audience with tales from his 23-year playing career.

League secretary Kevin Herbert said: "Paul was very good. He spoke for about 40 minutes about his playing days and then did a lengthy question and answer session with the audience.

"He signed a load of books throughout the evening and never refused a photograph or an autograph. He was very amenable.

"It was a very good and enjoyable evening and a great way to end a successful season."

Milford had most to celebrate after a fine summer that saw them clinch promotion to the Birmingham League after winning the Premier Division title.

Crowned

They also doubled up by lifting the first team Knockout Cup while the second team were crowned Premier A champions. For good measure talented youngster Chris Becker picked up the Junior Performance of the Year award.

Among the other accolades that were dished out, Cannock stalwart Graham Machin was a worthy winner of the Clubman of the Year award while Trevor Cotton was Umpire of the Year.

The night capped an impressive season for the league that saw the introduction of a new playing format in the top three divisions with 11 games played under the old system that included the possibility of

SPORTING FEATURE

By Nick Elwell

"It was a very good and enjoyable evening and a great way to end a successful season."

a draw and 11 played on a straight win or lose basis with restrictions on the number of overs a player could bowl.

"The switch in playing format was well received by the clubs," said Herbert. "It was obviously new to the captains and teams but the feedback we have received has been very good.

"You obviously need a minimum of five bowlers in the win or lose format. And I think you end up with the strongest team coming out on top as opposed to the team with the strongest overseas player.

"The plan was for the format to run for two years and it will be reviewed over the winter.

"We are slightly concerned at the number of conceded games, especially in the lower divisions, but all in all it was a successful season.

"I think Milford were worthy winners in the end and as a league we wish them all the best for next season in the Birmingham League," added Herbert.

Springvale and Rugeley will be playing top flight cricket next season after gaining promotion from Division One with just one side, Bloxwich, relegated due to the fact no Staffordshire sides came down from Division Three of the Birmingham League. Elford are

joining the league next season while Springvale are entering a third team and Wightwick will a fourth.

Staffs Clubs roll of honour:

Premier Division: Winners Milford Hall; runners-up Beacon.

Premier A: Winners Milford Hall; runners-up Aldridge.

Division 1: Winners Springvale; runners-up Rugeley.

Division 2: Winners HGBU; runners-up Old Wulfs.

Division 3: Winners Wolverhampton; runners-up Burntwood St Matthews.

Division 4: Winners Wombourne; runners-up Rushall.

Division 5: Winners Wightwick & Finchfield; runners-up Beacon.

Batting - Premier Division: Brian Barnard (Cannock) 1044 runs. Premier A: Shafqat Hussain (Aldridge) 671. Division 1: Stuart Jones (Coseley) 849. Division 2: Mohammed Ajmal (HGBU) 734. Division 3: Hassan Touqueer (Wolv) 758. Division 4: Tim Davis (Milford Hall) 588. Division 5: Michael Jones (W+F) 519.

Bowling - Premier Division: Ejaz Nawaz (Milford Hall) 51 wickets. Premier A: Matthew Richards (Penn) 32. Division 1: Mohammed Sultan (Rugeley) 57. Division 2: Ben Hallam (OWT) 51. Division 3: Joey Brew (Wolv) 42. Division 4: Ryan Dewsbury (Wightwick & Finchfield) 46. Division 5: Neil Walker (Beacon) 40.

Clubman of the Year: Graham Machin (Cannock CC).

Performance of the Year: Muhammad Sultan (Rugeley).

Junior Performance of the Year: Chris Becker (Milford Hall).

Umpire of the Year: Trevor Cotton.

Knockout Cup - First team: Winners Milford Hall; runners-up Cannock.

Second team: Pelsall; runners-up Penn.

Third team: Wednesbury; runners-up Burntwood St Matthews.



Rugeley's Muhammad Sultan is presented with his Performance of the Year award



Paul Nixon, Milford Hall skipper Harry Flowers and Alex Williams, director of league sponsors Cicada Sports



MP Valerie to kick off new stand

WALSALL MP Valerie Vaz will be helping Darlaston Town (1874) celebrate yet another landmark with the official opening of the club's new 50-seat spectator stand.

It is further helping the club get over the dark days of 2013, when the original Darlaston Town FC folded after 139 years in existence.

After a 12-month fund raising campaign a group of supporters reformed the club in 2014 and the phoenix club registered with the West Midlands Regional League in 2014/15 and was promoted in its first season and are currently lying 6th in the West Midlands League Division One.

The club moved to its current home at the Paycare Ground, Bentley Leisure Pavilion in January 2014 and since then has spent more than £30,000 improving the dressing rooms, clubhouse and ground and spectator facilities.

The MP is carrying out a ceremony before the team's Birmingham County FA Vase game against Midland League Alvis Sporting FC on Saturday at 1.15pm. The new development has allowed the club to meet the required FA National Ground Grading Criteria, helping aid their progression up the football pyramid.

The project was partly funded by a £15,288 grant from the Premier League, through the Football Stadium Improvement Fund (FSIF), the largest funders of non-league football in the country.

Funded with £5.2m each year from the Premier League, the FSIF is the country's largest provider of grants towards projects that help improve the comfort and safety of lower league football grounds in both the professional and amateur game. These improvements range from new football stands and turnstiles to floodlighting and improved provision for disabled supporters.

Top of the table finish for first XI Bloxwich hockey

BLOXWICH end 2016 at the top of the table after a win against Leamington on Saturday.

Bloxwich Men's First XI did not play their best hockey on a miserable day at Sneyd but did enough to ensure they got the three points they needed to take the top spot in the league.

The scoring was opened in the first half with Mandeep Sandhar linking well with Jamie Proberts to get the opening goal. Harry Robinson and Jake Perkins both scored to give Bloxwich a comfortable lead at half time.

Bloxwich continued to search for goals in the second half but were not clinical enough to get another until Leamington got a goal from a short corner. Bloxwich countered well with Eddie Marrocco scoring Bloxwich's fourth and final goal.

Despite Bloxwich never really finding their best form in the game, they fought hard for the win and are happy with the first half of the season.

Bloxwich know they must improve if they want to win this league and will train hard over the Christmas break to give themselves a good chance in 2017.

Karate trio have eyes on Olympic prize



From left, Emily, Jessica and Chloe

THREE teenage karate stars are eyeing up the 2020 Tokyo Olympics after picking up a glut of medals at the European championships.

Between them Chloe Machin, aged 18, Emily Johnson, 16, and Jessica Whitehead, 13, came back from Belgium with three golds, two silvers, and four bronze medals for Wadokai England.

All three girls hope to be picked again for the next European championships in 2017 in Sardinia, Italy, followed by the 2018 worlds in

Leicester. The bigger prize for the three Mushindo Wadokai members, who train at Bradley Senior Citizens Centre in Bilston, is that karate will be included in the summer Olympics for the first time in 2020.

"It means a lot representing England at European and World Championships but representing Great Britain at the Olympics would be a step above," said Machin, of Walsall.

She attended Pool Hayes Comprehensive, in Willenhall, and Walsall College and has been practising ka-

rate for seven years, representing England at four European Championships. She has eight European medals.

Johnson, a second Dan black belt, from West Bromwich, attends Sandwell Academy. She holds five European medals.

Whitehead, from Heath Hayes, of Erasmus Darwin Academy in Chasetown, has been in the England squad for three-and-a-half years, winning seven European medals. She is a 1st Dan black belt.

MORE ERRORS FOR SADDLERS

IT'S a story that has now played out too many times this season.

Inexperience and individual errors are conspiring to ensure Walsall's 2016/17 campaign could peter out before the New Year.

And at Highbury Stadium on Saturday, we saw how youth and a lack of nous is affecting Jon Whitney's side all over the park.

A 2-1 win for Fleetwood ensured the Cod Army secured a first ever victory over their West Midlands opponent. But as is so often the case in League One, this was a clash of fine margins with the Saddlers conceding both their goals because of individual errors. The opener for Uwe Rosler's side arrived just before half-time when a poor pass from Kevin Toner allowed Ashley Hunter to seize possession.

It was Joe Edwards who effectively lost the ball, but the midfielder should never have been placed in that position when the striker was breathing down his neck so heavily.

Inexplicably

Having pinched Edwards' pocket, Hunter dashed at goal before curling home an unstoppable strike from 20 yards. But had Toner simply cleared his lines, the Saddlers would have made it to half-time all square.

The same could be said for Fleetwood's second goal. This time fellow centre-half Matt Preston inexplicably passed the ball straight to George Glendon in midfield.

And the Cod Army then worked the ball wide with Hunter's cross tipped away by Neil Etheridge but only into the path of Bobby Grant, who drilled it into the net.

Like Toner before him, Walsall would not have conceded if Preston hadn't given away possession so cheaply. Ironically, Whitney had spoken before the game about how difficult it is for young defenders to force their way into a team.

He pointed out every mistake is highlighted because it often leads to a goal. And while that was certainly true for Toner and Preston here, it wasn't just at the back where Walsall were lacking. Up front, Amadou Bakayoko has done spectacularly well when called upon this season. Here he was given a chance to prove he is now



Amadou Bakayoko gets stuck in, but was largely ineffective as Walsall crashed to a 2-1 defeat

ready to be Walsall's first-choice striker. But the 20-year-old found it difficult to influence the game, with his lack of hold-up play ensuing the Saddlers often struggled to keep possession.

Bakayoko wasn't helped by the fact he was partnered up top by Erhun Oztumer, who looks lost in a striking role. The Wizard of Oz may be blessed with outstanding ability, but he is a number 10 and not a centre-forward.

For that selection, Whitney has to shoulder the blame with Oztumer needing to be utilised in the middle of the park where he can really hurt teams.

The boss also has to find a way to win without Kieron Morris, who missed the trip to Highbury.

Morris's ability to carry the ball was sorely missing on the Fylde coast. And, incredibly, the Saddlers are yet to win a league game this season which the winger hasn't started.

The one big positive for Walsall from the trip to Highbury was the performance of George Dobson, with the West Ham loanee netting his first senior goal in an overall impressive display.

But in truth this was a game between two sides that were so evenly matched, chances were few and far between. It was Walsall though who made the costly errors. And while they have enough about them not to be dragged into a relegation scrap, any hopes of the play-offs are now fading fast.

Veseyans hold on for late victory

Veseyans 21 Walsall 20

THE management at Walsall will be very disappointed with this defeat at local rivals Veseyans. It proved to be yet another occasion where the Walsall team contrived to lose a game which they had dominated for long periods, especially during the second half.

Once again, the Walsall players started the game with great purpose. This resulted in an early try after possession was retained and fullback Jack Crawshaw made a neat break before kicking ahead. Winger Ethan Walker showed good speed to win the race for the touchdown. Carless added an excellent conversion.

The hosts, however, enjoyed some good periods of possession after this, taking advantage of some wayward Walsall kicks. Veseyans took the lead early in the second half as several drives from lineouts created the space for winger Will Checker to cross for a try which was also converted by Griffiths. The Walsall forward power was beginning to create good attacking positions.

More pressure by the visitors saw fly half Wood make a neat break with the supporting players only being inches short of the tryline. Veseyans struggled to defend the resulting scrums which forced the referee to award a penalty try with only eight minutes left, making it 20-14. But, not for the first time during the afternoon, the hosts were soon pressing for a score.

The visiting defence was stretched and long passes put Joe Williams over near the corner flag. Griffiths then converted to secure what seemed an unlikely win for most of the game.

Lockmen open up Bilston's defence

Bilston 1 Willenhall 2

WILLENHALL Town were able to secure a fantastic 2-1 win in the Keyway Derby at Bilston Town Community in the West Midlands League Premier Division.

Both sides had already gone close before the Lockmen took the lead on seven minutes when Chadd Birch's snapshot beat former Willenhall keeper Ben Holden at his near post.

The lead was doubled on 11 minutes when player-boss Mark Habbershaw launched a stunning 30-yard strike into the far top corner, leaving Holden absolutely no chance.

Bilston halved the deficit just before the break when Dan Elwell powered home off the underside of the bar on 40 minutes.

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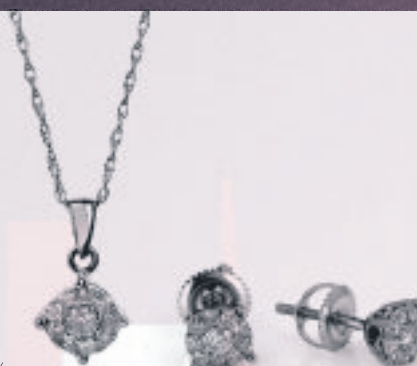
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